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STRAY THOUGHTS ON LIFE

B. C. SEN

STRAY THOUGHTS

On

LIFE

By

B. C. SEN

LATE OF THE INDIAN CIVIL SERVICE

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P R E F A C E

This little book is a collection of essays written at different times and necessarily intended for more or less different readers. There is, therefore, in them a repetition of similar ideas, sometimes expressed in the same language, which, I fear, may be distasteful, when read together in a book. As, however, all the essays are based on certain philosophical and scientific principles, such repetition may, I hope, serve one useful purpose, *i. e.* to make my ideas clearer owing to their being expressed from different points of view. Through them all run the following threads :

(a) That to know Ultimate Truth is not given to man. We know nothing of the attributes of the Ultimate Cause or God beyond what are revealed by the forces and laws of Nature. All else is speculation and imagination on the part of religion and philosophy. They have their temporary use, but as Viscount Samuel has said ; "Truth must be put in the first place". In the long run delusions and superstitions must fail of their purpose, and leave life a rudderless boat.

(b) That the law of Causality is of universal application. As a consequence there is no Free Will in the sense of Causeless will. This implies repudiation of the conventional definition of free will adopted by some philosophers, as will

determined by reason. Such a definition is to my mind a misuse of the word free, the natural meaning of which should be "not caused by any influence or restraint."

(c) That acceptance of the law of causality leads to determinism and its implications. Both the advantages of free will and determinism have been dealt with. It is contended that the supposed advantages of free will are of a sentimental character and due chiefly to religious bias. Among the numerous benefits of determinism the two most important are : first, that it is indispensable for order and the prevention of chaos in life ; and, secondly, that a belief in it should lead to toleration, which is one of the greatest sources of peace and happiness, and in the words of Einstein, 'a continual consolation and unfailing well-spring of patience in the face of the hardships of life.' Determinism gives one courage to accept the inevitable. Great and wise Dr. Johnson was terribly afraid of death. I, a humble determinist, am not.

(d) That the most mysterious attribute of the Ultimate Truth is potentiality for evolution in nature according to uniform laws. This evolution is going on ceaselessly, and endlessly, and is the most marvellous factor in the universe.

(e) That the Problem of Evil, which has given rise to world-old controversy in religion and philosophy is, to my mind, capable of a rational solution. Good and Evil are relative to persons and circumstances and do not exist in the Cosmic

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or absolute sense. In any case, they are the inevitable products of the forces and uniform laws of nature, and the Ultimate Cause or God is obviously indifferent to them in the human sense. We must accept this situation as we find it and face it courageously.

(f) That, generally speaking, whatever happens in the universe, material or mental, happens inevitably as the resultant of the causes at work. The implications of this general principle are vast and all-embracing. There is no chance or luck. The inevitable must be accepted. The only way to avert evil, so far as it may be possible, is to know and take the help of the forces and laws of nature.

(g) That animal nature, including human nature, is mainly based on the primitive instincts which were and still largely are, necessary for self-preservation, rationality being a later product of evolution, and even yet almost in its infancy, and easily overpowered by instinct.

In the last chapter of the book I have given brief and condensed expression to some fundamental aspects of Nature, that seem to me to be the product of the above principles. I may also mention that the chapter on "Culture Conflict" was written at the invitation of the Indian Science Congress and read before its Delhi Session in January 1947.

The opinions expressed in this little book present a realistic view of Nature based on science and philosophy as I understand them. By far the largest number of people have a mystical, emotional

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and romantic conception of God or the Ultimate Cause, which to them is undoubtedly a source of much happiness and consolation in life, however unreal it may seem to me, and which it is not my intention to disturb. I have expressed my own convictions, but in no dogmatic spirit. The reader will no doubt, form his own judgment according to his temperament. I do not expect that "Paul will become Saul" as Max Planck has put it in one of his books.

In connection with these essays I trust it is permissible for me to state that the encouragement afforded by some letters of the Rt. Hon'ble Viscount Samuel with which I was fortunate enough to be favoured under unusual circumstances, though I have never met him personally, has been my chief inspiration, without which they might never have been written. This does not of course mean that we agree in all our ideas.

I must also express my debt of gratitude to my good friend Prof. J. N. Ghosh of Patna for his constant support, and for undertaking ungrudgingly the not very interesting labour of correcting the proofs without which help I would have found it very difficult to have the book printed in present circumstances. That debt I can never repay.

A suitable index has been provided to facilitate reference to the text.

Patna
6th May, 1948.

B. C. S.

CHAPTER I

STRAY THOUGHTS ON EDUCATION

[1942]

Knowledge and Virtue

The old idea that knowledge begets virtue is a superstition that still widely prevails among educationists, and learned men have expressed great surprise that after thousands of years of education a world-war like the present should have been possible. This false idea originated at a time when science and the scientific method of discovering truth were unknown. Great men thought great thoughts in their own minds in isolation from nature and reality. Great philosophers spun theories about the universe and life out of their own imagination in ignorance of facts. Concerning such philosophy Lord Samuel, who is President of the British Institute of Philosophy, has recently written :

“Philosophy should cease to take logic as its foundation and dialectics as its instrument and should consent to draw its conclusions in the main from premises which are provided by nature. *** Philosophy then should begin with facts, as Bacon told us long ago, and it is only science that can supply them”.

Education and Science

Science has made immense strides during the last four-hundred years since the time of Galileo,

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and yet judging from our educational system, educationists seem hardly aware of it. Though psychology as a science is still in its infancy it has made enough advance to have established the important fact that man is mainly guided by his instincts, emotions and desires, and that knowledge and reason have little motive force even in the most highly developed human being. This is a fact of nature which I venture to say, the educator must recognize.

Science and Human Nature

Another false idea that has been expressed by many is that the progress of science is responsible for this war. Science merely registers the forces and laws of nature. It has established that they are uniform and immutable, and that they are Cosmic and unconcerned with the welfare of man. Evil has been a puzzle in all religions, to solve which great prophets and philosophers have striven in vain. Science makes it clear that evil is only relative. There is nothing absolutely good or absolutely evil in the Cosmic sense. The same forces and laws of nature produce good or evil according to circumstances. For instance, life would be impossible without heat from the sun, and yet in certain circumstances the same heat produces terrible famines and destruction of life. The drug that may kill the typhoid germ is a supreme good to man but a supreme evil to the germ. Science that has produced poison gases has, with the help of the same forces and laws, created innumerable amenities of life. So science has nothing to do with

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ethics or morals. The manner in which man utilizes the discoveries of science depends on his instincts and mental make-up. How to change man's nature is therefore the problem. If educationists can solve that problem they will have deserved well of humanity. But I doubt. Instincts and emotions cannot be changed by only instruction and advice. It is the force of circumstances, great evils like wars, the relentless school of experience, that can change human nature and that only slowly. A quarter of a century ago, the last great war produced the League of Nations, but the lessons of the war did not sink deep and wide enough into men's hearts and the League failed. The present war, it may be hoped, will make some further progress along the same path. But the impatient educator must realise that change of heart is a slow business and if he expects a large or quick return for all his schemes he will be disappointed.

Liberal Education And Science

Some, disappointed and disgusted with the result of centuries of education, have observed that it must be planned afresh. I agree, but not because Science has produced all the wickedness of the world and there should be less or none of it. The old idea that liberal education consists in a study of the classics, and imaginative literature and fanciful philosophy must be given up. Fancy and imagination should be replaced by fact and reality. Science and the scientific method have revolutionised knowledge and

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exploded most old ideas, and its teaching should I think be made compulsory at an early stage of education ; not its technique and higher developments but just the elementary principles and the common facts touching our practical life that it has discovered and established. A course of studies that excludes all exact sciences and in which imaginative literature predominates, as the Arts courses of our universities, is likely to turn out, I am afraid, unpractical visionaries who know nothing of the world they live in, or of their own body, health and mind, and most of them remain ignorant of such matters all their lives. Ask men highly educated in the Arts who have not studied physics: "if a one-pound shot and a ten-pound shot be taken up to a height and dropped simultaneously, which will reach the ground first ?" I am almost certain that cent per cent of them will reply "why of course the ten-pound shot". This was the famous experiment by Galileo from the top of the Leaning Tower of Pisa towards the end of the sixteenth century that may be said to have introduced the scientific method. The great learned from Aristotle down had up to that time been ignorant of this simple fact in nature.

It may be said that the Universities provide for the separate teaching of science after the stage of schools. Everyone, however, is not fit to and need not study science in its technical and higher aspects. But I think every boy should be compulsorily grounded in the elements of one or two important sciences, specially physics, before the

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stage of specialisation comes. It is I think most important that the scientific spirit should be infused into him and the habit of accurate thinking created at an early stage of education. If necessary the study of imaginative literature should make way for it. That can come more profitably at a later stage, for at the age it is introduced at present it is only swallowed unappreciated to be disgorged at examinations. Above all, every boy should be convinced that we live in a universe guided by fixed and immutable laws, which any one can test for himself. If this great fact can be impressed upon his mind it will obviate many superstitions and puzzlements in later life. I have no fear that boys will find these things too difficult to grasp. It is well known that children from an early age take intense interest in anything practical but revolt against any form of book-learning divorced from practical life. The teaching of science will rouse their curiosity to know, the spirit of wonder, to do which is I think one of the most important functions of education.

Education And Religion

One often hears the lament that modern education is 'Godless'. The Upanishads say in lofty language that 'the purpose of education is the realization of the Divine.' But what is to be done when men's ideas about "God" and the "Divine" are so different? Religious faith is bred in one's bone and its depth is formidable. That

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important fact must be reckoned with. The usual appeal for a realisation of the many points of similarity and unity among religions, and minimization of their differences will, I fear, be as productive of result as the recent deliberations of scientists in England to devise a means of so improving the moral and ethical nature of man that he may not utilize scientific knowledge for the destruction of his fellow creatures but only for the promotion of their welfare. Such reconciliation of religious faiths has been tried before by such august bodies as "Parliaments of Religions."

There is to my mind only one solvent that may have a sporting chance against religious bigotry and superstition, and that is, as I have suggested above, the compulsory teaching of the elements of science and impressing upon the minds of our youth the great fact proved by science that God rules through immutable laws. Any system of state education should, I think, leave the revealed or metaphysical aspects of religion severely alone and to the personal faith of individuals. That will do no harm. Religious men are not necessarily good and godless men are not necessarily bad. The basis of goodness seems to me to be sympathy with one's fellow creatures in the sorrows and tribulations of life. Dogmatic religion does not tend to create that sympathy. On the contrary it often creates great hatreds as the history of the world amply shows. It is best to let it slumber in one's own breast.

CHAPTER II

EVIL, RELIGION AND MORALITY

[1937]

I Introductory

Evil, Religion and Morality are problems that have confronted man from the very dawn of his mind. In speaking of religion I shall chiefly refer to it in its popular sense, *i. e.*, religion with a belief in a personal God or gods or any supernatural powers, which still forms the creed of the great majority of people in every country. Religion in its higher spiritual or philosophical aspects is more or less a personal matter and does not admit of a general discussion.

Evil, Religion and Morality are intimately connected. So intimate indeed is the connection that I think it was Evil that gave birth to both Religion and Morality. As soon as man could think and reason he found himself face to face with the forces of nature before which he felt powerless. They brought him disease, death and bereavement, floods, earthquakes, lightning and thunder, and a hundred other evils. In his fear and helplessness he naturally sought some higher power that could protect him from such evils, or tried to propitiate the natural phenomena that seemed to produce them. So originated the rudiments of religious feeling, which at first took the shape of animism, fetish worship

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and such like faiths. Later, higher forms of religion evolved with the development of the human intellect and as more experience of life was gathered. Later still, even higher spiritual and philosophic aspects of religion came to be conceived. So, to the original element of fear were gradually added others which have been variously described as a sense of awe and reverence, a sense of feeling for the Infinite, a sense of Mystery, a desire for righteousness, a reaction of the created to the presence of the creator, a sense of the highest value or good, mysticism of various types.

II Evil

But it seems to me that the central factor in all religious feeling even in its highest forms, is still the fear of evil, the sorrows and unhappinesses of life. Even Buddhism, though without a personal God, arose out of the sights of evil that met its great founder in his youth. It is the desire for perfect peace and bliss that makes the mystic seek communion with the Infinite. Except for the presence of evil, of unrest and unhappiness in life, it is doubtful if the mystic would have any motive for doing so. It has been said by a great thinker that the quest of happiness is the basis of all religion.

The existence of Evil is inconsistent with the conception of an omnipotent, omniscient and all-just God. So the problem of Evil has been a standing difficulty in the way of any philosophy of religion. The great popular religions have

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each attempted to solve it in its own way. Vedantism looks upon Evil as mere Maya or illusion. The obvious objection to this doctrine is that to the victim evil is very real, and it cannot bring him any consolation to be told that it is all illusion. Then, there is the doctrine of Karma. It is more plausible but seems improbable. If we are punished for our sins in a former life, we should at any rate be allowed to know what those sins were, or else the punishment becomes pointless and vindictive. As a matter of fact we have no recollections whatever concerning a previous life. Christianity has its doctrine of Original Sin. I greatly doubt if any rational mind can rest satisfied with such an explanation. It is, besides, wholly incompatible with the conception of a kind and just God to punish one for the sins of another. Some thinkers have tackled the problem philosophically. The theory of Leibnitz was that "this is the best of all possible worlds". Now, there can be no absolute standard of possibility. To an omnipotent God everything should be possible. Some have said that evil is the consequence of our finitude, others that "it is a defect of being and non-existent", whatever that may mean. Yet others say that good can only exist through the constant overcoming of its opposite, i. e., evil. But none of these theories seems to me to solve the problem of suffering. The reality of suffering cannot be explained away in this manner.

What then is Evil? It seems to me that evil and good are relative to human welfare and

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relative to circumstances. There is nothing essentially and absolutely evil. It all depends on the circumstances. The same forces and laws of nature produce both good and evil according to circumstances. The same physical laws that give us clouds, and beneficent rain that allays the heat of the sun and enables vegetation and food crops to grow, also produce destructive floods, lightning and thunder. The same sun that makes life possible also produces terrible famines ; the same physical and chemical laws that cause devastating earthquakes, have been harnessed by man to produce steam engines, motor cars, aeroplanes, as well as the most powerful engines of destruction. The same electricity that brings down the dreaded thunder-bolt, has yielded a thousand amenities of life in the shape of lighting, fans, telegraphy, wireless, railways, steamships, aeroplanes and all kinds of machinery. The most virulent of poisons are being utilised to cure the most malignant of diseases. The most powerful human instinct, i. e., sex, which is keeping up life, is at the same time leading to most heinous crimes. The same laws of heredity are transmitting both health and disease, both bad and good traits of intellect and character, from parents to children. In the moral world what is considered moral and injurious in the circumstances of one society may have the full sanction of another. Such instances may be multiplied indefinitely. It is in this sense, perhaps, that evil may be looked upon as Maya as was thought by the Vedantists. But to say that evil is relative is not to say that it is an illusion.

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III Religion

Let us now see how this explanation of evil affects our religious conceptions. Science tells us, and it is our every day experience, that the laws that govern the forces of nature are fixed and immutable. They seem to work their way regardless of good or evil, at any rate, to the living terrestrial world, whatever their significance may be to the cosmic universe. All religions with a personal God postulate a God omnipotent, omniscient all-just, the highest good, as the cause of the universe. It may be presumed that the forces and laws of nature have emanated from that God. It seems then that Nature is inconsistent with the attributes of a personal God as conceived by religion. Our every-day experiences also belie the existence of such a God. In our helplessness we pray to God, but whenever we pray for anything against the laws of nature, our prayer is not heard. In destructive wars both sides pray for victory. But God listens to those who have utilised the forces of nature to the best advantage, and are armed with the latest and most powerful engines of destruction. It seems, therefore, that the conception of a personal God who upon prayer, suspends his laws of nature for individual benefit finds no support from any experience in life. I am aware this cherished belief has brought mankind much consolation in the trials of life. I also admit that the conception of a God who is heedless of our sorrows and sufferings, is highly repugnant to us. But mere sentiment cannot alter facts.

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If there be no personal God the question naturally arises: what is the Cause of this universe and what are the attributes of that Cause? Out of theism, deism, pantheism, atheism, agnosticism etc., which are we to choose? To this I have no complete reply beyond what I shall indicate further on. The riddle remains unsolved. Nearly a thousand years ago, the poet-philosopher Omar Khayyam said:

*Myself when young did eagerly frequent,
Doctor and Saint and heard great argument,
About it and about, but ever more,
Came out by the same door as in I went.*

The position remains just the same to-day in spite of the religious and metaphysical speculations of the greatest minds.

But whatever the cause of this universe and the attributes of that cause may be, it seems that to create harmony between outer nature and our inner lives, the conception of a personal God must be given up. Nature and this conception cannot be reconciled. Do we then know nothing at all about the character and attributes of the Ultimate Cause? Religious teachers and metaphysicians have revealed nothing which is more than speculation or creation of the imagination. But there is something of an objective nature, which we can directly perceive and verify, that has been divulged by science, i. e. the forces of nature, both physical and mental, and their laws. These appear to be the only tangible and verifiable indications we have of the nature and

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attributes of the ultimate cause. In the absence of anything more certain, I fear, we have to be satisfied with this glimpse of the ultimate reality however fragmentary and imperfect it may be. It seems that it is by praying to these forces and attuning our lives to them, that we are more likely to protect ourselves from evil, so far as may be, both material and moral, than by praying to a speculative and inconsistent personal God. If we want to know or get nearer to God we are more likely to do so by investigating the forces and laws of nature than by mere speculation, for these forces and laws must have emanated from God and must be a reflection of his image however imperfect and incomplete.

Einstein divides religion into three classes :—

(1) Religion of Fear ; (2) Belief in a Social or Moral God ; a Providence who loves and protects, rewards and punishes ; and (3) Cosmic Religion. He considers the principal religions of all civilised peoples to be a mixture of the first two classes. Cosmic Religion he places highest of all. It consists in a feeling of wonder, awe and reverence in the presence of the sublimity and marvellous order of this universe, and its Mysteries which we yearn to fathom but cannot. I would call it the Religion of Wonder. The religious feeling of mystics is akin to this. According to Einstein scientists are the truest votaries of this religion. At any rate it seems to me that this is the only form in which religion can be reconciled with science and

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philosophy and the 'practical experiences of life.

IV Morality

Let us now consider the problem of morality. As in the case of religion the origin of morality also lies in Evil. Were there no Evil in life there would be no distinction between good and bad, and the problem of ethical conduct would not arise. In a world of perfection nothing could be wrong.

What are the basis and standard of moral conduct ? Some believe in Divine commandment, some in the dictates of what they call conscience, others in intuition or a categorical imperative, and yet others in the theory of utility. To me morality seems to be the product of human social life, and the necessities of its welfare. There is nothing Divine about it. So far as we know there is no moral sense in the lower animals. Nor does there seem to be any moral sense or purpose in the cosmic forces, so far at any rate as human beings are concerned. That being so the theory of utility seems to offer the best test of moral conduct. Professor McDougall says that the principle of utilitarianism cannot easily be rejected and speaks of the great truth embodied in its doctrines. He considers that reference to the consequences of action upon human welfare is the only true and ultimate criterion of moral value. Utilitarianism has been criticised by different philosophers but mainly on the basis of the difficulties of its practical application. But I think the basic principle holds firm as ever.

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The greatest happiness is the greatest good. If we boil down all high-sounding ethical ideals, we find that we finally all seek happiness, though each may seek it in a different shape. Life would not be worth living if it did not bring us happiness. The promotion of happiness is, I conceive, the final touchstone of all righteous conduct.

Duty And Altruism

I now come to two aspects of moral conduct which considerably affect our outlook on practical life, i.e., Duty and Altruism. It is usually thought that to do good to others is one of the highest duties of life. The word duty has been used by philosophers in the wider sense of "whatever is right or desirable." But in its ordinary popular sense, duty is what it would be wrong not to do. I do not think one is under any obligation to do whatever is desirable. It must be an obligation created by one's self. Altruism is desirable and laudable, but it is not a duty. Not to do one's duty is immoral. Not to do an altruistic act is not immoral. It is just non-altruistic. I marry a wife and have children. It is my duty to support and cherish them. I borrow some money from a friend. It is my duty to repay the loan. I live in a Society or State from which I receive various benefits. It is my duty to promote the welfare of the Society or State to the best of my capacity. But is it my duty to help individuals with whose wants and sorrows I have had nothing to do and from whom I have

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received no benefit? Most people seem to think that it is. But why? I cannot be responsible for the condition of others unless I have been the cause of it.

I shall press this principle in a wider sense. If anyone is responsible for the evils of life it is Providence himself or the forces of nature. No one else can, therefore, be saddled with any duty to redress these evils. I was brought into this world without my leave or consent, and I gave no undertaking before I was given birth to, that it would be my duty to redress the wrongs of life. It is, therefore, in no sense that it can be my duty to do good to others.

All this will seem frivolous and shockingly selfish and immoral. But I must press this view in all seriousness. I am not unappreciative of the value of altruism in life. But I think that its structure has been raised on a false basis, and that it has been given disproportionate value as an ideal, owing to which it is more often than not debased, and takes an unhealthy course. It has become a sort of sloppy sentimentalism.

The two ideas, first that we are not born to any duty, and secondly that Providence or nature, and not ourselves, is responsible for the ills of life, were poetically but clearly expressed a thousand years ago by Omar Khayyam in two quatrains of his famous rubaiyyat.

The first says:—

‘What, without asking, hither hurried whence?
And without asking, whither hurried hence!
Another and another cup to drown
The memory of this impertinence!’

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Here the poet emphasizes the fact that we are brought into this world without our leave or licence. It follows, therefore, that we cannot be born to any duty. The second quatrain runs as follows:—

*'Oh, thou who man of baser earth didst make,
And who with Eden didst devise the snake,
For all the sin wherewith the face of man is blackened,
Man's forgiveness give and take'*

Here the poet-philosopher boldly expresses the view that it is Providence and not ourselves who brought evil into life. These may appear words of supreme impudence and blasphemy, but they are words which, to my mind, cut through all sentimental fog and search the very heart of things.

The New Psychology

That Providence or nature is responsible for the evils of life, that we are mostly the creatures of our natural instincts, environment, and other circumstances beyond our control, is being more and more recognized by psychologists. In his book entitled "The New Psychology" Mr. Tansley says of the human mind:

"The New Psychology then looks upon the human mind as a highly evolved organism, intimately adapted, as regards its most fundamental traits, to the needs of its possessor, built up and elaborated during a long course of evolution in constant relation to those needs, but often showing the most striking want of adaptation and adjustment to the rapidly developed and rapidly changing demands of modern civilized life. Its most fundamental activities are non-rational and

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largely unconscious activities. The power of conscious reasoning is a later development, playing but a minor part, even in the most highly developed human being, on the surface, so to speak, of the firmly built edifice of instincts, emotions and desires, which form the main structure of the mental organism. In many cases, the apparent importance of rational activity is seen to be illusory, forming, as it were, a mere cloak for the action of deep-seated instincts and desires."

This conclusion of modern psychology was anticipated by Omar Khayyam a thousand years ago. The recognition of this is already affecting old ideas as to judicial punishment for crime and prison treatment and discipline. It is due to such construction of the human mind that human nature has changed so little in spite of the preaching of the religious and moral teachers for centuries. When such teachers preached humility, forgiveness and toleration, they built upon a deep scientific fact of which they were unaware, but which they, I think, instinctively and subconsciously felt. Modern psychology tells us that we are good or bad, talented or incapable, because so we have been made. Virtue and vice, character and talent are not acts of free volition. When we say A is a good man and B is wicked, when we say A has great self-control and B has none, when we say A is generous and B is mean, we tacitly admit that these traits are part of their self which they cannot help, though we are not conscious of such an admission. There is less room for praise and blame in life than we think.

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Altruism and Sympathy

Now, what becomes the position ? We are not responsible for our birth, and so do not come into the world charged with any duty to perform. Then we are not responsible for most, at any rate, of the evils of life and so it cannot be our duty to remedy them. What then becomes of morality ? Must all moral conduct disappear from life ? By no means. Though I hold that altruism is not a duty, I have not lost sight of the fact that it is a moral impulse highly beneficial to society and mankind. But its true basis should be sympathy and not a sense of duty. When altruism is attempted to be practised from a sense of duty and not from real sympathy, it more often than not degenerates into hypocrisy and priggishness. There is no more objectionable person than the man who, without any real sympathy, wants to do good to other people, either for a good name, or from an intellectual sense of duty, real or pretended, while his inner nature is rebelling against it. The result is frustration, because such altruism against the promptings of one's inner instincts must end in feeble or short-lived action and the use of wrong methods. It must inevitably lead to hypocrisy.

John Stuart Mill and Altruism

This exaggerated and unfounded belief in the call of altruism as a high moral duty often leads to curious results. There was a significant incident in the life of John Stuart Mill related by himself in his autobiography. As a young man he had made it the principal object of his

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life to devote it to the promotion of the good of society and mankind in general. Suddenly one day it struck him that should he succeed in fulfilling his ambition and removing all the social wrongs, inequalities and injustices, there would be nothing left for him to do. This thought so affected his mind that it left him most depressed and unhappy for about two years, during which he often thought of committing suicide. Now, what was this strange mental struggle due to? At its bottom was the subconscious perception of the fact that he had attached undue value to the ideal of altruism, that it is not a bounden duty, and that it cannot form the main basis of one's happiness in life.

It is well-known that young men before they have entered life are often fired with a similar ambition, which usually evaporates as soon as they come into contact with the realities of life. The reason is that, after all, egoism is the solid foundation on which the structure of life is built, and altruism forms its ornamental superstructure as it were. Without egoism life would be impossible, without altruism society could not progress. Both are necessary, but each in its due proportion. Idealism should not be allowed to degenerate into sentimentalism. We must look facts squarely in the face.

Conclusions

I shall summarise my points:

(1) Both religion and morality have originated from the existence of evil in life. Evil is relative to human welfare. It is neither an

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illusion nor the result of our Karma in a previous life, nor due to the laches of Adam and Eve. It is produced by the interplay of the forces and laws of nature and their reaction to circumstances. The same forces and laws produce both good and evil impartially according to circumstances. Nature knows no good or evil.

(2) The existence of evil is not consistent with the conception of an anthropomorphic personal God.

(3) We know nothing of the nature and attributes of the Ultimate Cause of this universe, or God if you like to call it, except the forces and laws of nature, both physical and mental. These must have emanated from God and must be a reflection of his image, however imperfect and incomplete. Their study is the best way of knowing God and avoiding evil so far as may be possible in life. The methods of religion and metaphysics have so far proved barren.

(4) Morality is the product of human social life and the necessities of its welfare. There is nothing divine about it. No sense of morality exists among the lower animals. The cosmic universe and laws seem to know no morality in the human sense.

(5) Utilitarianism is the best test of moral conduct so far propounded. There is a good deal of loose talk and thinking about "duty". Duty is an obligation created by one's self. We are not born to any duty for the simple reason that we are not responsible for our birth.

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(6) Altruism is not a duty, for we are not responsible for the ills of life. Its proper basis should be sympathy, and not any sense of duty. When not prompted by genuine sympathy it must lead to frustration and hypocrisy. It is then distinctly demoralising.

Personal God and Life

At present we are perplexed and distracted by the disharmony and inconsistencies that exist between outer nature and our inner conceptions. If the views expressed by me above be true, I think a more harmonious philosophy of life can be built upon them.

The discord in life is mainly due to the conception of a personal God, which militates against our experience of life. If we give up that idea and take the forces and laws of nature as our guide to save us from the evils of life, so far as may be possible, if we realise as a stern fact, however unpalatable, that apart from these we know nothing of the ultimate cause, and of the cosmic forces, except perhaps this that they seem to tend gradually to evolve the complex from the simple, though even that may be a mere cycle—if we realize, that they are, so far as we can perceive, heedless of human happiness and suffering which are mere accidents in cosmic evolution, we can reconcile most of the apparent perplexities and disharmonies of life. To free life from all evil is not possible for our microscopic selves, as some of the forces of nature are beyond our control. Those evils which we cannot avert in spite of our best attempt to control them in

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our favour, we must accept as inevitable, and the inevitable is only another name for the popular "Fate".

Religion and Fate.

One may ask, what about the consolation that religious faith brings whether it be true or false ? If you look deeper you will find that even the firmest believer ultimately finds consolation in "fate". When he cannot find any response to his prayers, and cannot reconcile his sorrows with a kind God, do we not often hear from the perplexed believer the cry of despair "Oh God, whatever is must be for the best. Thy will be done" ? Is that anything more than the acceptance of the inevitable or Fate ?

Religion of Wonder

As for higher spiritual longings and aspirations there will still remain the Religion of Wonder, and a vast field for speculation, for Nature as known to us can only represent a fraction of the Ultimate Reality. So long as we hold fast to the things we know, and do not believe in speculations which are inconsistent with known facts, there is no harm in speculating about things we do not know. Speculation is the mother of knowledge even in science. The harm comes when we forget that speculation is speculation, and accept speculation as firm faith. Then it becomes superstition and is fraught with danger.

Religion, Philosophy and Science

One falsity must lead to others just as to cover one lie other lies have to

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be told ; and so false beliefs and superstitions grow like snow balls. The history of the world shows that dogmatic religion has always barred the way to truth and retarded the progress of knowledge. Professor A. Wolf in an article on the progress of philosophy and science, says of the period in the history of Europe soon after the advent of Christianity :

“The general attitude of the Christian Church towards philosophy and science was decidedly hostile. In 390 A. D. Bishop Theophelus destroyed one of the libraries of Alexandria. In 415 A.D. Hypatia, the daughter of Theon the astronomer, and herself a teacher of mathematics, was brutally murdered in Alexandria by a mob of Christian fanatics. And to crown it all, the Emperor Justinian had all schools of philosophy closed in 529 A. D. The first great period in the history of human thought thus came to an end, leaving the West to darkness and the Church.”

Anatole France makes one of his characters say of the the same period in Europe:

“The Christians burnt books, overthrew temples, set fire to the towns and carried their ravages as far as the desert. There, thousands of unhappy beings turning their fury against themselves lacerated their sides with points of steel. And from the whole earth the sighs of voluntary victims rose up to God like songs of praise. It seemed as if science and thought had perished for all eternity, and that the earth would never again know peace, joy and beauty.”

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Similar consequences followed more or less the promulgation of dogmatic religion in every country.

In this connection I need hardly mention the persecutions and unbelievable atrocities religion has led men to commit in almost every country in the world, massacres, burnings at the stake, incredibly cruel tortures, setting man against man and rousing in human beings the instincts and passions of the beast, while kind God, as religion conceives Him, has sat on his throne and watched them unmoved.

But the end is not yet. Religion still divides man from man, promotes hatred, quarrels, murders, riots and bloodshed ; and cruel persecutions still prevail, even among the most advanced nations. Jew-baiting has only recently received a fresh lease of life in a shape which seems incredible in the middle of the twentieth century. Hindu-Moslem disunity is blocking further political progress in India.

In defence of the diversity of religions one often hears people say that all religions are at bottom the same and that they vary only in form. That idea is to my mind mere self-deception. All religions may more or less agree as to the general moral ideas inculcated. But morality is not religion. It is in the various dogmatic conceptions of an anthropomorphic personal God, and in the other dogmas that have followed in their wake, that religious differences are potent for mischief. It is these that form the distinctive essence of traditional religion. It is these that are

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setting man against man, and have given rise to the evils of religious fanaticism, intolerance and all sorts of superstitious beliefs. It is no use trying to minimise the mischievous effects of these by saying that all religions agree as to some basic moral ideals which are quoted as their justification. One can be moral without being religious. Religious fanaticism seems to be like the inferiority complex in which excess and, I shall say, ferocity of faith try to make up for the weakness of its basis.

I am aware that owing to human ignorance and helplessness, religions in their present shapes have been inevitable. I admit that religion has brought much consolation to mankind, but I fear that it has also brought much misery. I am not prepared to say which has been greater. But if the idea of a personal anthropomorphic God be unfounded, as it seems to me that it is, this false dogma must, as it has done, inevitably distort the whole philosophy of life, leading to all sorts of other false dogmas, harmful beliefs, practices and superstitions, and barring the way to truth, knowledge and progress.

It seems to me, that the Religion of Wonder is the only form in which religion can be reconciled with science and philosophy, while at the same time satisfying the higher religious impulses. It is only in this form that religion can avoid the great evils of dogmatism, fanaticism and intolerance.

CHAPTER III

A GREAT ILLUSION IN LIFE

(1943)

Dear reader, I wonder if you have ever visited an asylum for lunatics. The other day I took it into my head to go to one. As I sauntered over the grounds I noticed that the inmates had been divided into several classes, who were housed differently and were being treated differently. Some were locked up in barred cubicles and were shouting and swearing and trying to break down their little prisons. There were other cells, in some of which the inmates were weeping and crying the whole time. In others they looked supremely happy and were breaking out into loud peals of laughter every now and again. Other inmates of the Asylum were wandering about the grounds freely. One would not suspect there was anything wrong with them. Some of them followed me about and talked to me quite normally. As I went out, one of them, a woman, followed me right up to the gate and bade me goodbye in the grand manner, and asked if I knew that she was a daughter of Queen Victoria. On enquiry the Superintendent told me that the types of mental abnormality of different lunatics were different, which depended on the cause of derangement of the brain, and so they had to be accommodated and treated different-

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ly. He added that it was fortunate that the general behaviour of each class was consistently the same always and never changed, that they were consistently inconsistent, or else it would have been impossible to deal with them in an Asylum. As I walked back home I fell into a reverie. So even lunatics were consistent in their abnormal behaviour, which depended on the cause of derangement of their mind. I instinctively pictured to myself the mentality and character of my friends, including the most intimate of them, my own self, and automatically each character fell into a class by itself, consistently different from the others as the mentality of the lunatics in the Asylum I had just visited. These characters tried to disguise themselves from time to time, but in their kaleidoscopic changes on the surface my mind's eye never missed the type and fundamental identity of each.

As I woke up from my reverie on reaching home I felt distinctly uncomfortable. Is my Self also then the slave of the causes and circumstances surrounding me just as the lunatic's ? Has my mind not the freedom to be inconsistently inconsistent which the lunatic's has not, the power to rise superior to circumstances and to the mind of the lunatic ? But what then ? Suddenly it struck me that then I would be in a worse position than a lunatic, and life would be a chaos. I could not then tell what would happen to myself and the world from moment to moment, and all that I could know would be my own experience of the moment. I could anticipate

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nothing in the future. I shrank from the idea in horror !

My friend, this seems a matter to ponder over. I am aware that you feel in the very marrow of your mind that Man, the highest creation of God, has complete freedom of will. But what if it landed us in such a predicament ? I would feel desperate and desperately look for a way of escape from such freedom. Perhaps you would feel the same. But we need not despair. This feeling of the freedom of our will is only a nightmare and one of the illusions of life. Look round and you will see that the Law of Causality governs the entire Universe, that nothing happens without a cause, even the derangement of a lunatic's mind, my idiosyncrasies, and yours. Look into your own mind. Do you find any wish or will arising in it without some cause ? If the cause be not apparent in rare cases, look for it with a little patience and you will usually find it. You must also remember that our mind works in part unconsciously like our internal organs, and then we cannot know the causes guiding such working. No dear reader, Free Will is a metaphysical myth of philosophers and an illusion of our ignorant mind. But do not be alarmed, and be thankful that it is so, as we shall presently see.

Let us try to realise the implications of a free will a little more clearly. Just think. If you believe that events may occur without any cause, that ideas and impulses may arise in your mind without any cause, that you can wish or not wish to do a thing for no

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reason whatever, then the action of your mind must be utterly capricious and uncertain, and you yourself could not anticipate how it would work from moment to moment. You form excellent resolutions, but there can be no guarantee that at any time your free will would not lead you to do the very opposite. Love may turn to hatred and hatred to love at any moment. At any moment you may attack and kill your nearest and dearest. Similarly uncertain will be the working of the minds of others. You send your children to school for education, you scold them if they do anything wrong, you try to guide them with advice. If they have free will what expectation can you have that education, or scolding or advice will have any effect on them? If you are a zealous politician you make political speeches and expect that they will mislead according to the complexion of your politics. With free will in your hearers, I fear you will be doomed to bitter disappointment. No dear reader, free will would land you in trouble all round. It would make life a chaos, it would make us worse than the lunatics I visited the other day.

I can see you are still incredulous and loth to give up this life-long illusion of yours. You still think that the working of universal causality or determinism, as it may be called, would paralyse all effort, and undermine morality by making us its slaves and destroying all responsibility and all justification for praise or blame, reward or punishment. If you think a little you will be surprised to find that the situation would be just

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the opposite. It is free will that would make all activities and efforts of life useless and purposeless ; for no anticipation of any effect, good or bad, from any act whatever would be possible. It is determinism, the core of which is that every cause must produce its effect, that can justify effort. Here I would like you to note that Determinism is very different from Fatalism which indeed would paralyse effort, for according to that doctrine whatever has been predestined by Providence must happen, no matter what you may do to alter it. As for morality, free will would make that word meaningless, for how can a person, the working of whose mind is capricious and uncertain and not determined by any cause, be held responsible or be given credit for his acts ? In his case blame or praise, punishment or reward would have no justification and would be useless. So you will see that it is free will that would paralyse all effort and undermine morality.

I can see that you are impatient to retort that so would determinism undermine moral responsibility by making us slaves to the immutable law of causality. So it would. But I may tell you that moral responsibility is also a myth and an illusion. You raise your hands in horror and exclaim—What ? Be patient. The removal of personal responsibility will do no harm and will on the contrary do a world of good. You will ask, if men are not punished for bad acts and rewarded for good acts how can Society get on ? I can see the difficulty. But even with no moral responsibility you will still be justified in going

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on punishing and rewarding. Only the motive will be very different. It will be nothing more or less than the protection of society and individuals. Self-preservation is the fundamental instinct given us by nature and is the birthright of all, or else life could not exist. No matter whether a person is responsible for his acts or not, society and individuals have every right to do whatever is necessary for their own protection, and for the promotion of the general welfare of all. But nothing more. What is our motive for punishing at present? We think that due to some mysterious working of so-called free will the criminal commits crimes and individuals offend against each other out of sheer "Cussedness." So the State gets angry and inflicts inhuman punishments on criminals as retribution, and individuals get angry with each other and filled with hatred and vindictiveness, and personal relations are poisoned and embittered to an extent that must be well known to you. In the days of Romeo and Juliet, the Montagues and Capulets used to go for each other like hungry wolves. In these days of advanced civilization we use more effective methods, and destroy each other in millions. A belief in determinism would do away with these ugly motives of anger, hatred and retribution. Such a millenium is of course not waiting outside our door. Human nature is moved little by reason if at all. But a rational idea must bear fruit some day, however remote, I hope.

You are probably aware of the new movement taken up by all civilized nations for the

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reform of penal laws, and the more humane treatment of prisoners. If you have taken interest in the subject you may remember that this movement was formally and publicly inaugurated in India in Feb. 1940, at an All-India Conference in Bombay, presided over by Sir Maurice Gwyer, Chief Justice of India. At the bottom of the movement is a growing belief in Determinism though most of its promoters are not conscious of its full implications yet. It is, however, a beginning of good augury. A breach has at last been made in the Citadel of Free-Will, and it may be hoped that before long the whole structure will come tumbling down, for it is built on sand.

So much for blame and punishment. What about praise and reward? They are equally irrational and equally demoralising. My friend, I am sure you have visited many football matches and tennis tournaments, and come across football heroes and tennis heroes. Have you not noticed the nervous strain these men go through, their disappointment when they lose, and the envy and bad blood these competitions generate? Have you not noticed the narrowness of mind of these heroes, their conceit and want of culture? On the other hand, have you not also noticed the comical adulation and partisanship for their heroes on the part of the idle spectators, leading often to hooliganism and even riots? You will see how ridiculous and mistaken is the view of life of which these evils are the effects if you realize that the relative

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skills of these competitors are natural gifts for which they deserve neither credit nor discredit. Equally irrational and mischievous are competitions in schools and colleges and for the same reason. Competitions of all kinds lead to the mistaking of the means for the end. The tennis or foot-ball player forgets that the objects of playing games are enjoyment and improvement of health, and not the winning of public applause. The student forgets that the objects of education are the acquiring of knowledge and improvement of the mind, and not the passing of examinations and the carrying off of prizes. All competitions lead to overstrain, physical or mental, disappointment in the case of the majority, unhealthy rivalry and the generation of bad blood and conceit. They also lead to demoralising hero-worship. I would do away with them altogether. I would also expunge the words praise, blame and punishment from the dictionary and replace them by approbation, disapprobation and corrective.

Dear reader, not only the human mind but the entire universe, animate and inanimate, testifies to the reign of Causality and uniformity of the Laws of Nature. Says a great philosopher :

“Every farmer when he breeds cattle, or when he sows a field of wheat, every gardener when he sets bulbs, manures his plants or prunes them, sees causation at work in the sphere of life. Every lesson in a school, every sermon in a church, every speech at a political meeting assumes that actions are open to influence or

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in other words that causation applies in the sphere of the mind".

Turning to the inanimate world, the triumphs of physics and chemistry, engineering and metallurgy proclaim the same reign of causality and other laws of nature.

I know you will still ask "Why do we have an innate feeling that our will is free, if it is not?" Some philosophers have regarded this as an unanswerable argument in favour of the doctrine of Free-Will. I ask you: Why do we all feel that the Sun goes round the Earth even though we now know that it does not? Why do I feel that the table I am writing on and the wall in front of me are solid, even though I know that they are not? Why do most people feel that they have a soul apart from the body, and others, including the great Buddha, deny its existence? Why do mystics feel that they are communing directly with God, while others think it to be merely a mental illusion? I am not going to discuss who is right and who is wrong. But both parties cannot be right. Why did great philosophers, both of the East and West, propound many theories at one time that are now obsolete and even seem absurd? Why did the great Plato think that ideas and universals were more real than concrete objects, that whiteness was more real than, say, the white Taj? Why does the famous Vedanta philosophy teach the illusion that evil is Maya? I am sure if I drove a pin into your flesh you would not think that the pain was an illusion. I am sure

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the millions of men who are left maimed and lacerated on the battlefields in this world-war do not think that their horrible agony is illusion. No my friend, our sense perceptions and feelings, and imagination are not to be trusted. The human mind is still full of ignorance and illusions, and this feeling of free will is born of them. It seems to me that God first created Free Will, but soon found His mistake as it began to create chaos all round. So in His perplexity He became a Constitutional Monarch, created as His Ministers Causality and the other Laws of Nature and bound Himself to act on their advice. Since then there has been order and peace.

One last word of apology to you, reader, for I can see I have exhausted your patience. To me the problems of Free Will and Determinism are not academic or metaphysical but fundamentally affect our practical life, as I have tried to show. Life would be all the happier and social and personal relations all the smoother, kindlier and more indulgent if the superstition of free will could be got rid of. Or else I would not have troubled you or myself. Metaphysically any thing is just as possible as it is impossible. Do not worry about the metaphysical justification of free will, except in your philosophical class room.

CAPTER IV

REORIENTATION OF LIFE

(1945)

I. Introductory

Two years ago when writing on Free will I began as follows :

“Dear reader, I wonder if you have ever visited an asylum for lunatics. The other day I took it into my head to go to one. As I sauntered over the grounds, I noticed that the inmates had been divided into several classes, who were housed differently and were being treated differently. Some were locked up in barred cubicles and were shouting and swearing and trying to break down their little prisons. There were other cells, in some of which the inmates were crying and weeping the whole time. In others they looked supremely happy, and were breaking into peals of laughter every now and again. Other inmates of the asylum were wandering about the grounds freely. One would not suspect there was anything wrong with them. Some of them followed me about and spoke to me quite normally. As I went out, one of them, a woman, bade me goodbye in the grand manner and asked me if I knew that she was a daughter of Queen Victoria. On enquiry the Superintendent told me that the types of mental abnormality of different lunatics were different and depended on the cause of derangement of the brain in each case, and so they had to be accommodated and treated differently. He added that it was fortunate that the general behaviour of each

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class was consistently the same always, that they were consistently abnormal, or else it would have been impossible to deal with them in an asylum. As I walked back home I fell into a reverie. So even lunatics were consistent in their abnormal behaviour, which depended on the cause of derangement of their mind. I instinctively pictured to myself the mentality and character of my friends, including the most intimate of them, my own self, and automatically each character fell into a class by itself, consistently different from each other as the mentality of the lunatics in the asylum I had just visited. These characters tried to disguise themselves from time to time, but in their changes on the surface, my mind's eye never missed the fundamental identity of each."

I shall try to develop the subject further. Is my type of mind and the types of mind of my friends with whom I daily converse also fixed by definite causes as in the case of the lunatics? I thought of my friends. The mentality of each seemed different as their faces. We consider the minds of lunatics abnormal. What is abnormal? different from ours? But our minds are also different from each other's; then we are also abnormal to each other. Why are we all different? Is it due to differences in our constitution? Why are our constitutions different? What determines our constitution? Causes or chance? In any case it seems we cannot change our minds, like our faces. But we ought to be

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able to, for we have free will. I have read that it is a unique gift from God to man, His highest Creation. But what does it mean? If it is free it should not be bound by any cause, for then it would not be free. They say it arises spontaneously. What is "Spontaneous"? How does it arise, from what? As I thought on I came to unexpected and strange conclusions, which I feel I must share with you, dear reader, however much they may shock you.

II. Free Will

Worried and perplexed I went to some of my friends and asked them "Do you believe in Free Will?" "Yes, of course I do" each of them said. "What kind of free will do you believe you have?" "Why, I have free will because I can do as I wish, unless of course I am prevented." "But your wish to do any thing, is that free and not due to any cause?" At this stage my friends paused and began to think. Further discussion followed, and in the end most of them said they thought there must be some cause for every wish. So what the ordinary man understands by free will is the ability to do what he likes or wishes to do. It has nothing to do with the wish or how it arises. His free will is, therefore, a mere confusion of thought. Let us see what the philosopher means by free will. Says Professor C. E. M. Joad after an exhaustive examination of the doctrine in his "Guide to the Philosophy of Morals and Politics":

"It is only if it is with a faculty that is reason, or is at least rational, that we will morally and

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judge morally that, most philosophers are agreed, the moral will or the moral judgment can be held to be free".

In other words, according to philosophers our will is called free only when it is the result of judgment arrived at by reasoning. But, dear reader, reasoning is a complicated process, which has to take into account various circumstances and their bearing on each other, many conflicting emotions and wishes, of which the final wish is the resultant. In what sense can such a wish, formed as the result of so much deliberation, be called free? If philosophers like to call such a wish free, no one can prevent them. It seems to me it is a mere nomenclature. To me it seems that a wish can be called free only when it is formed in the mind for no cause, that is, when it is causeless. I have looked into my mind time and again and can seldom find a wish for which I cannot trace a cause. It must be remembered that our mind sometimes works unconsciously, like our internal organs, when it would not be possible to know the cause. It seems to me that no wish can arise in our mind without some cause. If this is ignorance on my part I am not ashamed of it. A philosopher like Schopenhauer has said :

"We can do what we will. But we cannot will what we will"

Implications Of Free Will

Free will in the above sense, therefore, means that wishes and impulses can arise in our mind

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without any cause, that we can wish or not wish to do a thing, for no reason whatever. In that case, you will see reader, the working of our mind must be capricious and uncertain, and we could not anticipate how it would act from moment to moment. We form excellent resolutions, but there can be no guarantee that at any time our free will would not lead us to do the very opposite. At any moment love may turn to hatred and hatred to love. We send our children to school for education, we scold them if they do anything wrong, we try to guide them by advice. If they have free will, i.e. a will that is not influenced or determined by any cause, what expectation can we have that education or scolding or advice will have any effect on them ? No, dear reader, free will would land us in trouble all round. It would make life a chaos. We could not anticipate anything in life. We could not tell what would happen to ourselves and the world from moment to moment, and all that we could know would be our experience of the moment. Would you not shrink from such a possibility in horror ! But we need not despair. This doctrine of free will is a myth and one of the many illusions of life as we shall see by and by.

Free Will And Experience

What is our experience ? We see that law and uniformity prevail in our daily life. We generally do not see anything very unexpected happening. When we do, we can usually form some idea of the probable cause or causes. We

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know that as we sow so shall we reap. If you widen your observations you will see that the entire Universe, both animate and inanimate, is governed by fixed and immutable laws, that nothing happens by chance. Says Viscount Samuel:

“Every farmer when he breeds cattle, or when he sows a field of wheat, every gardener when he sets bulbs, manures his plants or prunes them, sees causation at work in the sphere of life. Every lesson in a school, every sermon in a church, every speech at a political meeting assumes that actions are open to influence, or in other words that causation applies, to some extent at least, in the sphere of mind.”

Turning to the inanimate world, the triumphs of physics and chemistry, astronomy and engineering, and all the cognate sciences, proclaim the same reign of causality and other laws of nature.

The same philosopher has written : “the doctrine of values is the mythology of the philosopher.” Let me whisper into your ear that the doctrine of free will is equally a myth created by philosophers for a definite purpose, as I shall show further on from its history.

Free Will and Effort

I can see that you are alarmed at the possible consequences of the working of universal causality, or determinism, as philosophers have called it. You are afraid that by depriving us of free will and destroying our responsibility for our own acts, it would paralyse all effort and under-

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mine morality. If you think a little, you will be surprised to find that the situation would be just the opposite. It is free will that would make all activities and efforts of life useless and purposeless. If our will worked capriciously unaffected by any cause, no anticipation of any effect from any effort would be possible. It is determinism, the core of which is that every cause must produce its effect according to uniform laws, and that nothing can happen without a cause, that can justify any effort. Here I would ask the reader to be clear in his mind about the distinction between determinism and Fatalism. The latter indeed would paralyse effort, for according to this doctrine whatever has been predestined by Providence must happen, no matter what we may do to alter it; while according to determinism every effort must produce its effect.

Free Will and Morality

As for morality, free will would make that word meaningless, for how can a person, the working of whose mind is capricious and uncertain and unaffected by any cause or influence, be held responsible or be given credit for his acts? In his case, blame or praise, punishment or reward would have no justification and would be useless. So you will see that it is free will that would paralyse effort and destroy morality.

I can see that you are impatient to retort that so would determinism undermine moral responsibility by making us slaves of the immutable laws of nature. So it would. But do not be

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shocked if I tell you that moral responsibility is also a myth and an illusion, like free will. The removal of personal responsibility will, however, do no harm and will on the contrary do a lot of good. You will ask if men are not punished for bad acts and rewarded for good acts how can society get on? I can see the difficulty. But even with no moral responsibility you will still be justified in punishing and rewarding. Only the motive will be different. It will be nothing more or less than the protection of other individuals and society. Self-preservation is a fundamental instinct given us by nature and is the birthright of all or else life could not exist. No matter whether a person is responsible for his acts or not, society and individuals have every right to do whatever may be necessary for their own protection and the general welfare of all. But nothing more. What is our motive for punishing at present? We think that due to some mysterious working of so-called free will, the criminal commits crime, and individuals offend against each other, out of sheer "cussedness". So the State gets angry and inflicts excessive, unsuitable and sometimes inhuman punishment on criminals as retribution, and individuals get angry with each other and filled with hatred and vindictiveness, and personal relations are poisoned and embittered to an extent that must be well-known to you. In the days of Romeo and Juliet the Montagues and the Capulets used to go for each other like hungry wolves. In these days of advanced civilization

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we destroy each other in millions. A belief in determinism would or should do away with these ugly motives of anger, hatred and retribution.

So much for blame and punishment. What about praise and reward? They are equally demoralizing. My friend, I am sure you have attended many football matches and tennis tournaments and come across football heroes and tennis heroes. Have you not noticed the nerve-strain that these men go through, their disappointment when they lose, and the envy and bad blood these competitions generate? Have you not noticed the narrowness of mind of these heroes, their conceit, and want of culture? On the other hand, have you not also noticed the comical adulation and partisanship for their heroes on the part of the spectators, leading often to hooliganism and even riots? You will see how ridiculous and mistaken is the view of life of which these evils are the effects when you realize that the relative skills of these competitors are natural gifts for which they deserve neither credit nor discredit. Equally irrational and mischievous are competitions in schools and colleges and for the same reason. Competitions of all kinds lead to the mistaking of the means for the end. The tennis or football player forgets that the objects of playing games are enjoyment and improvement of health, and not the winning of public applause. The student forgets that the objects of education are the

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acquiring of knowledge and improvement of the mind, and not the passing of examinations and the carrying off of prizes. All competitions lead to overstrain, physical or mental, disappointment in the case of the majority, and the generation of bad blood and conceit. They also lead to demoralizing hero-worship. I would do away with them altogether. I would expunge the words blame and punishment from the dictionary and substitute for them approbation, disapprobation and corrective.

III History Of Free Will

I have said above that the doctrine of free-will is a myth created by philosophers for a purpose. I gather from authoritative sources that the idea of free will first appears in Plato who wanted to vindicate the ways of God to men by making them responsible for their own troubles and sorrows. This he tried to do by attributing to them free will. The idea, though entirely irrational, as I shall try to show, caught on for want of a better explanation of evil in life. It became clearer in Aristotle. Then came the Stoics and the Epicureans with their respective metaphysical theories. The Stoics believed in a world-soul controlling everything and so were determinists. The Epicureans, on the other hand, did not believe in any kind of cosmic order, and so adopted the hypothesis of free will. Later, Christianity was faced with the same difficulty as Plato's of reconciling the existence of evil with the conception of an Omnipotent and All-merciful God, and tried to solve it in various

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ways. The difficulty was also perceived in the moral sphere. It was thought that if man was not held responsible for his acts by the attribution of a free will, it would destroy morality. So the muddle once started took various shapes and continues to this day. In modern times, Kant is said to be the best known philosopher on the problem of free will. He thought freedom of the will absolutely necessary in the interest of morality, and defended it on that ground. But he was in a serious difficulty, for he believed at the same time in the scientific explanation of all phenomena, and this demanded determinism. In his perplexity he made a metaphysical distinction between phenomena or the world of appearance, which he admitted was subject to determinism, and noumena, or the world of reality, in which he postulated freewill, and conceived of man as belonging to both. So the reader will see that the origin of the doctrine of freewill lay in two wishful thoughts, i. e., to vindicate God, and to protect morality. The idea was not conceived because experience suggested it, or any enquiry into the nature of the mind and will of man led to it. It was felt by the philosopher that in the interest of religion and morality man should have free will, and so he was saddled with it.

Free Will and The Problem Of Evil

Let us briefly consider these two aspects of free will. Firstly, is free will necessary for the vindication of religious doctrines? Different religions have tried to solve the

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problem of evil in different ways. Vedantism looks upon evil as mere Maya or illusion. Then there is the doctrine of Karma which is a form of determinism. Christianity has its doctrine of Original Sin. Different philosophers have propounded different explanations. But it may be safely said that no explanation of evil has yet been suggested that is rationally satisfactory and has been generally accepted. The problem of evil is still a standing difficulty in the way of any philosophy of religion. Between you and me, I shall venture to offer an explanation of my own for what it is worth. All experience shows that the Universe is governed in accordance with fixed, uniform and immutable laws, which are cosmic and do not apply to man only. There is no absolute good or evil in the cosmic sense. Both good and evil are produced by the interplay of cosmic laws, and are relative. The same sun that makes life possible also produces terrible famines, the same physical and chemical laws that are helping the devastating world-war are also producing innumerable amenities of life. If you are attacked by typhoid fever, the typhoid germs are a terrible evil to you but the germs themselves are very happy to feed on you. The evil in this case is relative to you and not to the germs. If you think a little you will find this relativity of good and evil of universal application. How the Creator looks upon these results of the interplay of His laws it is not for me to say. No saint or philosopher has penetrated the Great Mystery yet. But one thing seems clear to me. The ways of God cannot be vindicated

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by attributing free will to man. If he has free will, it must also have come from the Creator. The conception is irrational and against all experience.

Free Will and Morality

The moral aspect of free will is even more untenable. As I have said above, free will instead of making a person responsible for his acts would on the contrary make him irresponsible, for the working of his will would be capricious and uncertain. With free will he could not be relied upon to act morally and any influence brought to bear on him would or might be useless. Let us see what modern psychology has to say in the matter. William McDougall describes the situation as follows :—

“Some effort must therefore be made to show that the effort of volition is not the mysterious and utterly incomprehensible process that the extreme libertarian would have it to be, but that it is to be accounted for by the same principles as other modes of human activity, that it involves no new principles of activity and energy, but only a more subtle and complex interplay of those impulses which actuate all animal behaviour and in which the ultimate mystery of mind and life resides”.

He says in another place :

“If the opposed view is true, if a man’s voluntary actions are not in the main determined by conditions comprised within the system of his mental constitution, the only ground for puni-

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shing him must be the emotion of resentment or revenge. For, if the issues of our moral conflicts are decided, not by the conditions of our own nature, but by some new beginning, some causal factor having no antecedents or by some mysterious influence coming upon us from an unknown source, a prompting from God or the devil or from any other source the libertarian likes to assign to it outside our own natures — then clearly we deserve neither praise nor blame, neither reward nor punishment, and it is useless to attempt to modify the issue of such conflicts by modifying our natures by means of these influences, that is to say, if the extreme libertarian doctrine is true there can be no moral punishment of a wrong doer, but only vengeful harming of him and therefore there can be no moral responsibility. The argument from moral responsibility is therefore altogether on the side of the determinist. It is the advocates of free will who would undermine moral responsibility".

Says Viscount Samuel from the rank of philosophers :

"Determinism furnishes a firm and stable foundation for ethics. It is the principle of causation that gives us the test of right and wrong—the test of consequences".

The reader will therefore see that the doctrine of free will was the artificial creation of some philosophers, great thinkers though they were, who were betrayed into propounding it by two fallacious wishful thoughts. It can vindicate neither God nor morality, and finds no support

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from practical experience or scientific enquiry. It is in fact a pure myth.

IV Determinism

Let us now see how, if the fiction of free will be rejected and we are convinced of the truth of determinism, it will affect our out-look on practical life. Let me remind the reader of what determinism is. It assumes that the universe is governed by fixed and immutable laws, that nothing, whether physical or mental, happens by chance or without a cause or causes, and that every cause produces a uniform effect. How would such a state of things affect morality and our general happiness ?

Determinism & Criminals

You are probably aware of the new movement taken up by almost all civilized nations for the reform of penal laws and more humane treatment of criminals. This movement was publicly inaugurated in India in Feb, 1940 at an All-India Conference in Bombay, presided over by Sir Maurice Gwyer, the then Chief Justice of India. At the bottom of the movement is a growing belief, inadequately perceived yet, in the deterministic idea that criminals are mostly creatures and victims of circumstances, and so do not deserve vindictive or retributive punishment. This is the view of most modern scientists and psychologists and many philosophers. From the point of view of psychology, William McDougall says :

“The infliction of pain from the motive of

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revenge or resentment is entirely amoral or immoral. Punishment is only justifiable, is only moral punishment, when inflicted as a deterrent from further wrong-doing and as an influence moulding character, that is to say, men are only morally responsible or rightly liable to punishment, if the punishment may fairly be expected to deter them from further wrongdoing, or to modify their natures for the better. It is for this reason that while we rightly punish children and animals we do not punish mad men."

Criminal laws and the treatment of criminals have so far been devised, as I have said, on the assumption that criminals commit crimes, not under the compulsion of circumstances, but out of a sort of vicious perversity for which they must be punished by way of retribution—an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Determinism should dispel this erroneous notion, and if it does, it will at once change our angle of vision towards crime and criminals, not merely on sentimental grounds but on a scientific basis.

Determinism And Social Relations

Take next our social and individual relations. The situation has been well described by George Gissing in that sad and sweet book "Private papers of Henry Ryecroft". He says:

"Man is not made for peaceful intercourse with his fellows ; he is by nature self-assertive, commonly aggressive, always critical, in a more or less hostile spirit, of any characteristic which seems strange to him..... Even love in

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the largest and purest sense of the word is no safeguard against perilous irritation and sensibilities inborn. Suppose yourself endowed with such power of hearing that all the talk going on at any moment beneath the domestic roofs of any town became clearly audible to you, the dominant note would be that of moods, tempers, opinions at jar. In mansion, as in hovel, the strain of life is perpetually felt, between the married, between parents and children, between relatives of every degree, between employers and employed. The average man or woman is always at open discord with some one. Speak in confidence with any one you like and get him to tell you how many cases of coldness, alienation, or downright enmity between friends and kinsfolk his memory registers, the number will be considerable and what a vastly greater number of everyday misunderstandings may thence be inferred."

Yet such an observer of human nature has written in another place of the same book :

"Let me tell myself the truth. Do I really believe that at any time of my life, I have been the kind of man who merits affection ? I think not. I have always been much too self-absorbed, too critical of all about me, too unreasonably proud."

What is the explanation of the fact that inspite of clear convictions, he could not correct in himself some of the traits of character he himself condemned ? The fact clearly is that he could not help being what he was, could not change

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inspite of his best judgment. This is what determinism postulates.

Consider next some other traits of our character, for instance conceit and vanity. Think what a nuisance a conceited man is in social life. He is laughably vain and unpleasantly over-bearing, and spoils the smoothness of all social intercourse. He is often worse. He does things chiefly for his own credit and fame, and such pursuit of fame often leads to unscrupulousness and disregard of the rights of others. It has led to the megalomania and ruthlessness of all world-conquerors of which the present world-war is presenting an outstanding example. The follies of conceit and vanity are many and they have caused much suffering and unhappiness in life. For these reasons I have condemned competitions in schools and colleges and in games. Now a determinist cannot consistently be conceited, for he knows that he is what nature has made him and does not deserve credit for any talents he may possess. The reader may retort that in that case he does not deserve any blame for his conceit either, for he cannot help his nature. That is true. But whether he can be blamed or not, society or his friends would be justified in taking suitable action to correct him. When that is not possible he has got to be put up with as a nuisance or terror. But even a theoretical belief in determinism should have some effect, more or less, in improving a conceited man.

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Consider some of the ideas commonly expressed by such words as accident, good luck or bad luck. The determinist should know that they are baseless and meaningless. Accidents are the effects of definite causes which can generally be traced. Similarly circumstances that appear as good luck or bad luck are also the results of the working of causes. To look upon such happenings as something mysterious is often a source of unhappiness or, it may be, of illusory happiness that does not last. Much unhappiness may be avoided if such superstitions can be put an end to by a faith in determinism. Nothing happens by chance. Chance is merely a name for our ignorance.

Here I must tell you that many of the ugly feelings in life, which cause so much unhappiness, such as anger, malice, hatred, desire for revenge etc., are deepseated instincts that are relics of our distant pre-social past, when they were necessary for self-preservation in a world of individual struggle for existence. They cannot easily be eradicated. The present world-war shows that our distant cousins, the wolf and the tiger, are not so very distant after all. All the same a belief in determinism will help, by showing that the idea of free will is false, and that we are creatures of causes and circumstances and cannot help being what we are.

V Conclusion

Suppose, dear reader, you and I wake up one fine morning and find that mankind has discarded

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free will, and come to believe in determinism. What shall we see? We shall see that the constant fret and jar of life, so well described by Gissing, and the more serious unhappinesses caused by our uglier anti-social instincts, vindictiveness, malice, spirit of revenge and retribution, love of power and many others of that type, have appreciably abated. We shall see that we have generally become more tolerant, more kindly, and more indulgent. We shall forgive each other more readily and bear less malice. Will not that mean a wholesome reorientation of life making for more peace and happiness?

Treatment of Germany After the War

The reader will not, I hope, take me for a pious sentimentalist. I do not believe in any cult, whether of non-violence or pacifism, Hitlerism or Vansittartism. Most cults are half-truths. But I do believe that a little increase of peace and happiness in life is well worth trying for. Just now politicians, philosophers, psychologists and others are exercising their brains over the problem, how to treat the German nation after the war, and various suggestions have been made, based on principles ranging from Gandhian non-violence to retributive Vansittartism. In this connection, I should like to tell the reader of two thoughtful articles that have recently appeared in the last January number of the Hibbert Journal: (1) "The Ethics of Punishing Germany" by A. C. Ewing, and (2) "The Punishing of Germany after the War of 1914-18" by C. J. Cadoux. The main object of both writers

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is to show that excessive and retributive punishment will not improve matters in the long run and may sow the seeds of a third World-war. Mr. Cadoux thinks that the Germans were treated with needless severity and vindictiveness after the last war, and quotes Mr. (now Earl) Lloyd George and Mr. Winston Churchill in support of that view. The former stated before the Supreme War-Council at Paris that the Allies "were sowing hatred for the future." Mr. Ewing says that reform should be the ultimate object in dealing with the Germans and writes : "Now prison reformers have found that what was needed chiefly in reformatory work among individual prisoners was kind and fair treatment, encouragement of new interest in the prisoners, steps with a view to the restoration of their shattered self-respect." Complexities of the problem are vast. But besides adequate preventive steps, firmness with sympathy should undoubtedly be the basic principle on which the future treatment of the Germans as a nation should be devised. Obviously a whole nation cannot be treated like an individual. All are not equally guilty and there are probably many who are not guilty at all. To take any severe punitive measure against the nation as a whole would be unjustifiable and unwise. The writers of the articles, however, do not go to the root of the problem in one important respect. Genuinely sympathetic treatment will be impossible if the idea is that the Germans deserve condign and retributive punishment for their cruel and ruthless acts, but should be treated with some

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sympathy to prevent future trouble. That will not deceive them or beget good feelings if rancour is at the heart of the treatment. Only good feelings can beget good feelings. It should be clearly realized that like lunatics and criminals they are, and so are we all, creatures of causes and circumstances that have been exercising their influence on them for centuries, and that they cannot help being what they are and doing what they have been doing. To think so must be most difficult. A clear understanding of the Law of Causality or the principles of determinism can alone bring about such a realisation and produce genuine sympathy in these difficult circumstances. The idea may appear utopian, but it is based on the scientific truth that the law of causality governs every activity in matter, life or mind, that nothing happens without a cause. With the spread of knowledge that truth is being perceived more and more clearly everyday. The idea may not now appear quite so utopian as it did, say a century ago. The modern attitude towards criminals is an indication of the reorientation of life that is taking place in this direction, slowly but surely.

CHAPTER V

OUR ANTI-SOCIAL INSTINCTS

[1946]

1. Hostility Between Man And Man

“Of how many dwellings can it be said that no word of anger is heard beneath its roof and that no unkindly feeling ever exists between the inmates ? Suppose yourself endowed with such powers of hearing that all the talk going on at any moment beneath the domestic roofs of any town became clearly audible to you, the dominant note would be that of moods, tempers, opinions at jar. In mansion as in hovel, the strain of life is perpetually felt between the married, between parents and children, between relations of every degree, between employer and employed. They debate, they dispute, they wrangle, they explode—then nerves are relieved, and they are ready to begin over again. Man is not made for peaceful intercourse with his fellows ; he is by nature self-assertive, commonly aggressive, always critical in a more or less hostile spirit, of any characteristic which seems strange to him.”

So writes George Gissing in that sad and sweet book of his: “Private Papers Of Henry Ryecroft.” Only yesterday I was walking along one of the main streets of Patna, and while passing through a bazar I heard two women quarrelling. One of them was so excited and angry that I thought at any moment she might burst a blood vessel in her head. Even in

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cultured and refined families such clash of temper is common, though perhaps it is given vent to in a less coarse manner. Leaving aside more serious causes of disagreement we cannot even tolerate differences of opinion, though the opinions expressed by the contending parties may be equally baseless. Each claims the right to express his own opinion, yet each party gets angry if the other says any thing in disagreement with his. What a common experience it is in social life to see such wrangling and loss of temper over nothing, based on nothing more than one's vague preconception or prejudice. In our daily conversation the dominant mood is to contradict or find fault with others, to put an unfavourable interpretation on the doings of others when a favourable view would be just as reasonable. We take greater pleasure in misunderstanding than in trying to understand. We love to worry over and discuss other peoples' affairs just to be able to have the satisfaction of blaming them. Careless and often vindictive gossip and misrepresentation of the doings of others are common food in social intercourse. We love to thrust unwanted advice down the throats of others, the motive, conscious or unconscious, being to show off our superior wisdom and indirectly to belittle and blame. In general it may be said that hostility towards one another is man's predominant instinct. We often try to rationalize that hostility into sympathy. The other day I heard a friend indignantly and angrily scolding another because he would not do some

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thing which the former imagined he should do in his own interest. So far as I could make out the real and deeper motive was jealousy. Some little time ago I over-heard a talk between two students of a European school in a hill station, and was shocked to hear the bitter terms of hatred in which they referred to the students of another school with whom they compete annually in games. It is hardly necessary in this connection to refer to more serious forms of antipathy that are brought out by religious, racial or communal disagreement.

II. The Root Of Our Anti-Social Instincts

Such hostility between man and man must have a cause. What is it ? The reader must have often noticed how two cats or two dogs behave when they meet. Their first instinct is to snarl and growl at each other. Man's instinct is not very different, inspite of the schooling of thousands of years of social life and its necessities. Science says that man is descended from lower animals, and however repugnant the idea may seem to the reader, it is a fact that the cat, the dog, the wolf, and the tiger are our cousins, and however distant that relationship may be, the facts of life show that we have not yet been able to completely get rid of our ancestral animal instincts. Man has made marvellous advances in his mental powers and in that respect left the animal far behind. But his instincts are still far behind his mind and intellect. The theory of evolution explains the persistent anti-social

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instincts in man. Man is the product of millions of years of the process of evolution, but unfortunately that process is very slow. In life the instinct of self-preservation is the strongest. That has obviously a necessity in the creativity of nature, for without it life could not endure. As each animal, however small, was evolved it lived by itself and for itself. At that stage fear, suspicion, hostility and pugnacity were indispensable in the struggle for existence. Gradually was evolved the social instinct as being more advantageous, first gregariousness and later social life proper, which in its highest form is to be found in civilized societies and nations of the present day. But the old, wild instincts born of the great central instinct of self-preservation are still in us, though much diluted and modified by the experience of millions of years. Not so very much diluted either yet, except superficially, as you will realize if you think of the incredibly inhuman atrocities committed by man upon man during the last world war, which has only just ended.

III. Our Instincts, the Product Of The Forces And Laws of Nature

Our instincts are the product of the forces and laws of Nature, to suit at each stage the progress of evolution for which Nature has an inherent creative impulse, call it by whatever name you like,—Emergency, or Elan Vital, or Creativity or Potentiality,—which is the most mysterious force in nature. To understand the

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character of these laws and their operation I would ask the reader to make the following principles clear in his mind :

(A) In this universe, physical or mental, nothing happens without a cause or causes.

(B) Every cause produces its effects according to fixed laws.

(C) From the above two principles it follows that *whatever* happens, in the animate or inanimate world, happens *inevitably* as the result of the causes at work.

We have no experience of anything without some cause, though we may not be able to trace all the causes definitely. You will see that it is most fortunate that this is so, for if things happened capriciously or hap-hazard without any cause, life would be a chaos and impossible. From the above three principles follows a conclusion which has a most important and vital bearing on our practical life. It is this :

(D) We are what we have been made by Nature and cannot help, feeling or acting as we do.

However repugnant and subversive of morality and religion such a conclusion may seem to be, if you accept principles (A), (B), and (C), inference (D) is irresistible.

IV. We Cannot Be Blamed For Our Anti-social Instincts.

If inference (D) be accepted, it follows that we cannot be blamed for our anti-social instincts. I

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have just said that such a conclusion may seem to be subversive of morality and religion. It may also seem to be against our instinctive feeling, for when a person offends us or does us any harm we have no doubt in our mind that he does so deliberately, out of some vicious propensity for which he is responsible. The ordinary man does not look beyond this feeling, feels angry and revengeful and proceeds to punish the wrong-doer, in any way he can, by way of retribution.

Invention Of Free-will

But the philosopher sees deeper into things and realizes that if nature's law of causality be accepted we cannot be held responsible for our instincts, good or bad. Quite early in the history of thought philosophers saw that such a conclusion would be subversive of morality and religion. If a person cannot be blamed and held responsible for his misdeeds and cannot be punished, what would become of morality? They also saw that if a person is what he has been made by Nature or God, how can his evil disposition be reconciled with the religious conception of an omnipotent and all-merciful God?

To surmount these two difficulties the philosopher invented the theory of Free-Will. It means that God has endowed man with the power of creating within his mind a will or wish which is not the product of natural causes, a causeless will springing within his mind out of nothing, at his magic command as it were. It is said that Plato was the first philosopher who

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conceived the idea of Free-Will in order to vindicate morality and God. Others followed and in modern times Kant was the most distinguished philosopher who supported the idea. But he was in a quandary. He believed in science, which was practically unknown in Plato's time, and saw that under the law of causality, which is the bed-rock of science, there could not be a causeless will. So he invented two worlds, one the world of phenomena or appearance which is subject to the law of cause and effect, and another, a metaphysical world of noumena or reality, which was above that law, and conceived of man as belonging to both. So the reader will see that Free-Will is a speculative metaphysical idea beyond our sense-perception, which was conceived for a purpose, a myth about which we need not worry in our practical life. Many eminent philosophers do not believe in this makeshift, and consider the idea irrational.

Psychology Does Not Support Free-Will

And utterly irrational it is from the point of view of modern psychology. That eminent psychologist William McDougall says in this connection :

“ The issues of our moral conflicts are decided by the conditions of our own nature, and not by some new beginning, some causal factors having no antecedents, or by some mysterious influence coming upon us from an unknown source, a prompting from God or the Devil”.

The nature of our mind depends on our constitution, physical and mental, and no wish

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can arise in it except under the conditions of, and unless it is caused by, that constitution. So our characters are fixed by our constitution and cannot be changed by us by any kind of so-called Free-Will. They can only be modified by adequate causes.

V. Kaleidoscope Of Human Character

Human character is kaleidoscopic in variety. With the possible exception of identical twins well known to science, there are as many different characters as there are human beings. The character of every man is different as I shall show the reader. Come let us watch the "magic shadow-shapes" of life and scan their characters as they go round:

There comes A, well educated, affable and polished, proud of rubbing shoulders with high life, with no sense of humour, weak and easily led, good natured, liked but not honoured; next comes B, a scholar, vain and conceited, loves to affect originality, highly impulsive, with strong likes and dislikes, a good friend but a bad enemy; there comes C, eminent in his profession, lacking in common sense, parsimonious and unable to enjoy the fruits of his labours, happy in his possession of wealth in the bank, sensitive and spiteful; next to him is D, recklessly extravagant, obsessed with the desire for credit and fame, jealous and spiteful quarrelsome, unscrupulous;—there is E, very able and intellectual with no principle or character, sweet-tongued, unreliable and treacherous; here comes F, highly intelligent, highly excitable and impulsive, with tre-

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mendous energy and drive, boastful, generous and kind. Next to him is G, "obsessed with the might of poesy", unpractical, a dreamer; there is H, highly sensitive, always misinterpreting the motives and acts of others, needlessly unhappy, affectionate and generous. Next comes I with dogmatic opinions on any and every subject, always sure of himself, fond of disputation with argument; reasonable, or unreasonable, believes in the maxim "if you do not win what is the use of arguing?" Now comes J, always looking at the dark side of life, always grumbling and irritable, nothing goes right for him, incapable of balancing good and evil; there is K, bad tempered and irascible, conceited and over-bearing, loves to contradict whatever others may say, loves to say cutting things and to hurt people, unpleasant and feared in company; next comes L, with strong feelings and impulses, autocratic and determined, unforgiving, with a strong character in which reason is easily over-powered by feeling, honest and straight, kind. Next to him comes M, able and straight, a reliable friend, selfish and unsympathetic, vain and fond of flattery; there is N, obsessed with power and position yet mild and timid, with no sense of humour, sincere and good-hearted; next comes O, learned, a philosopher, weak, unable to translate his philosophy into action, cannot make up his mind about anything; here comes P, effusive and sweet-tongued, will promise you the moon which never comes, a poisonous gossip; next comes Q, conceited, very proud of his super-

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ficial wisdom, loves to be always in the lime light; now comes R, mild and good natured, does not understand human nature, too trustful, easily duped.

My friend, there are many more to come; the procession is endless. But I think we have seen enough. The immortal characters of Shakespeare and Dickens are not fictions of the imagination, but were drawn from life, somewhat exaggerated, it may be, in order to impress.

VI. Human Character The Product Of Evolution And Cannot be Changed Easily

The important point to which I would now draw the attention of the reader after the survey of the various types of human character we have just made, is that they are products of the evolutionary process of nature and cannot be changed easily. There may be temporary changes under special influences, but those changes are never permanent. A mean man may become generous on a particular occasion or for a time, in the heat of emotion or for fear of social obloquy, but as soon as such influences cease to operate, his character will revert back to its original type. A dishonest man will be liable to act dishonestly whenever he gets a chance. A bad-tempered man will be liable to lose his temper easily, an impulsive man will always be liable to act hastily without adequate thought; a spiteful nature will always be liable to be jealous and spiteful. Character cannot be changed by the exercise of any kind of free-will. It can be

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lastingly modified only by the methods of Nature, which are not only very slow but often cruel. There can be no doubt that man has progressed a long way towards social amity if we compare the primitive instincts of the lower animals with ours. But science says that the earth came into existence at least two thousand million years ago, and man must have existed for millions of years. So the advance cannot be said to be particularly rapid. We do not actually snarl and growl at each other when we first meet. We even try to be friendly at first, but through the angularities of our nature, we soon begin to prick each other. If we look back at past history man seems to be just where he was some thousands of years ago. A great deal of the apparent improvement too is only skin-deep, liable to be swept away easily by the surge of instinct and passion, as the history of the last world-war amply shows. I wrote sometime ago in another connection :

“Instincts and emotions cannot be changed by only advice and instruction. It is the force of circumstances, great evils like wars, the relentless school of experience, that can change human nature, and that only slowly. A quarter of a century ago the last great war produced the League of Nations, but the lessons of the war did not sink deep enough into men’s hearts and the League failed. The present war, it may be hoped, will make some further progress along the same path. But the impatient educationist must realise that change of heart is a slow business and if he expects a large and quick return for

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all his schemes he will be disappointed."

I fear that for the modification of our anti-social instincts we must possess our soul in patience and wait mainly on slow evolution according to the laws of nature.

VII. Our Anti-Social Instincts Cause Much Unhappiness

These instincts, however, cause us very considerable unhappiness in everyday life as George Gissing has so well described. Seldom a day passes when we are not irritated by the behaviour of some one or other, when the jar of opinion does not fray our temper, when we are not victims of jealousy and spite, when we do not dispute and through the clash of temperament and character, explode. As Gissing has said "man is not made for peaceful intercourse with his fellows. In mansion or in hovel the strain of life is perpetually felt".

Toleration The Only Remedy

What is the way out of all this unhappiness ? It is useless expecting any change of character within a reasonable future. Our instincts are too deep-seated. The only remedy that I can think of is Toleration, toleration of one another's foibles and angularities, the cultivation of a spirit of forgiveness and pity for our helplessness in the coils of Nature. In her hands we are as helpless as lunatics are. If we do not feel angry at the behaviour of a mad man why should we feel angry at the behaviour of our other fellow-men ? You will say that a mad man cannot be held

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responsible because his mind is abnormal. But so are our minds abnormal to each other's. Abnormality is merely a matter of degree. The point is, as the lunatic has no control over his mind, so have we, so-called normal men, no control over ours. We are all equally helpless. Our position in nature finds very apt expression in that famous stanza in ancient Sanskrit literature which runs as follows :

Janami dharmam nacha me pravrittih.

Janamyadharma nacha me nivrittih.

Twaya Hrishikesha hridisthitena,

Yatha niyoktsasmi tatha karomi.

It may be translated as below:

I know what is right but have no inclination
for it,
I know what is wrong but cannot desist
from it,

Oh God who art seated at my heart,
I do whatever thou makest me do.

Substitute Nature for God and the sense will be more in consonance with science. Not Predestination but determinism is at the heart of the universe. The attributes of God are unknown to us, but Nature is within our sense-perception and we see that it is shot through and through with the law of causality. There is nothing hap-hazard about it. For our practical life need we look beyond ?

Toleration Easier Than Changing Human Nature

Toleration then, it seems to me, is the only thing that can bring a little more peace and happiness into our lives, quicker than the slow

process of evolution in Nature. I must at once confess that the attainment of toleration is not easy. It cannot be had merely for the wishing. But toleration should be much easier to practise than trying to change human character, for its attainment only requires a change of belief, the giving up of the irrational idea of Free-Will, and realizing that we cannot help being what we are and doing what we do. It has the further advantage of being an internal self-discipline in the interest of our own happiness, without interfering in any way with others. All the same it is, I admit, difficult. But there is no other remedy.

VIII. Punishment For Anti-social Behaviour

Lastly comes the question, are we merely to tolerate the misdeeds of others, and not punish them in any way? I have dealt with that important point elsewhere. Here I shall only say briefly that the punishment of wrong-doers is necessary and justifiable for our self-protection, which is the birth right of all, but its only motives should be to prevent, to deter and to reform, where possible, and not retribution or revenge.

IX. Summary

I shall now summarize my points.

(A) Our anti-social instincts are the remnants of the primitive instincts of animals, which were necessary in their struggle for existence when they lived lonely lives by themselves. These primitive instincts have been greatly modified by the necessities of social life during

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perhaps some millions of years—the earth is said to have come into existence at least two thousand million years ago. But they still exist in sufficient force to cause much unhappiness in life.

(B) We cannot be blamed for our anti-social instincts, for they are entirely the product of the forces and laws of nature, and are beyond our control. To understand and realize this adequately the following great principles in Nature, generally accepted by Science, should be taken note of :

(a) The universe is governed by the forces of Nature according to fixed laws ;

(b) Nothing in Nature, whether physical or mental, happens without a cause or causes ;

(c) Every cause produces its effect uniformly in accordance with fixed laws.

(d) It follows from the above that *whatever* happens in the physical or mental world, happens *inevitably* as the result of the causes at work.

(C) We have no Free-will, or will that arises in the mind without some cause. All our wishes arise as the result of, or one might say, under the compulsion of causes, and so we cannot be held responsible or blamed for our acts.

(D) We must depend for the lasting modification of our anti-social instincts mainly on the very slow process of evolution. Punishment and corrective action can only keep them in check temporarily.

(E) The only hope of bringing a little more peace and happiness into our lives more quickly

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lies in Toleration. We can attain toleration only if we can believe that men have no Free-Will, that they are entirely the products of natural causes and cannot help being what they are. Then only shall we be able to forgive and feel tolerant towards those who may annoy or harm us.

(F) The cultivation of toleration is an internal discipline which is not easy, but it is in the interest of our own happiness, and should be easier than trying to change the character of others.

(G) Nevertheless, the punishment of wrong-doers is necessary and justifiable in our self-defence which is the birth-right of all. But its only motives should be to prevent, to deter, and, where possible, to reform, and not retribution or revenge.

One last word. I can assure the reader that every one of the above individual traits of character has been taken from life. But they have been mixed up for reasons that will be obvious.

CHAPTER VI

CULTURE CONFLICT

(1947)

One hears of culture conflict all over the world, specially in India between Hindus and Muslims. What is culture ? It is a vague word and may mean almost anything. A few months ago I heard a series of radio-broadcasts from several eminent men, and found that the aspects of culture dealt with by each of them were different. In a wide sense it may be defined as follows :

“Culture includes education, knowledge, ideas, principles, belief, religion, taste, art, customs, habits and manners, in brief all acquisitions of mental activities that are conducive to welfare and happiness.”

Culture may be said to be synonymous with civilization and practically covers the whole of life. It is impossible to say at what stage of life culture begins.

The culture of any race or nation is determined by its entire past, and the causes in operation in each case being different, the resultant cultures are different, and when they come together there is conflict. It would not be much use trying to analyse the several aspects of different cultures as each culture is a settled fact, the product of a long past, and for which no one is responsible, or can be blamed.

I I.

A few Confessions Of Faith

In considering the conflicts of culture that have recently shown themselves almost all over the world, and particularly in our own country, it is important to realize two facts, first that no question of praise or blame can arise in respect of different cultures, and secondly that all conflict has its fundamental basis in human nature. To make these ideas better understood I shall make a few, introductory confessions of faith. I call them confessions of faith because they are propositions that cannot be definitely proved, and I know many will not accept them. I am, therefore, not putting them forward in any dogmatic spirit. All I can say is that they seem to me highly probable. They are inductions from extensive practical experience of philosophers and scientists, and such inductions are the main basis of all scientific inference and progress. I trust their connection with the subject under discussion will appear clearer as I proceed. These propositions are as follows:—

Constitution of The Universe

(1) The entire universe is a vast mass of energy. Science has disproved the substantiality of matter and shown that in its ultimate analysis matter is nothing but energy, and energy so far as is known is force, power, motion, sheer activity. The whole universe, physical as well as mental, is a manifestation of energy in various states and degrees of concentration and configuration.

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Matter And Mind

(2) Matter and mind are not different entities and are both manifestations of energy. Physical energy and mental energy are interchangeable, and such interchange is taking place constantly. For instance it is common experience that much concentration and intensity of thought lead to a sense of physical exhaustion and physical exhaustion, either through excessive exertion or disease, affects mental energy. The mind is depressed and not working with its normal vigour. Some suitable food or drug will restore its energy. Even warmth, whether of the sun or fire, may do so. Sense-perception, consciousness, feeling, thought, reason are products of the play of the same primeval energy as matter is, however they may have evolved.

Evolution

(3) This primeval energy has the potentiality to change and evolve according to fixed laws. The theory of such evolution is now generally accepted by scientists though all its causes and processes are not fully known yet. The universe has been evolving from primeval energy from the beginning of time and all that we see or feel round us are the products of evolution. This will be an important point in my analysis of culture conflict.

Forces And Laws Of Nature

(4) The universe, both physical and mental, is one inter-related whole, the forces of which are governed by fixed laws, and are shot through

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with a uniform law of causality. As Prof. Whitehead has said "any local agitation shakes the whole universe." All science is based on these assumptions, and the marvellous progress made by science in so many directions seems to confirm them.

Law Of Causality

(5) Nothing can happen, i.e., no change in existing circumstances can take place without some cause or causes. Every cause produces its effect uniformly according to fixed laws.

Determinism

(6) From the above it follows that whatever happens happens inevitably as the result of the causes at work. This conclusion will form another important point in my discussion.

Free Will

(7) It follows from proposition (5) that we can have no free will, in the sense of a will or wish that arises in the mind without any cause. I am aware it is a world-old problem that has not been settled yet, and that the majority of people still believe in free will, whether they understand the implications of the doctrine or not. I may briefly say that free will must mean causeless will, or the expression is meaningless. A free or causeless will is against our everyday experience in life. A causeless will would be uncertain and capricious and would make life a chaos. With a capricious will we could not anticipate what might happen from moment to moment, and transactions of the business of life would be

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impracticable. So far as I know such an idea does not occur in Indian philosophy. In European philosophy the idea is said to first occur in Plato who postulated it to vindicate God and protect morality. A little thought will show that it can do neither. Christianity adopted it to solve the problem of evil in a world created by an omnipotent and at the same time all-merciful God, but failed to solve it rationally. With due respect to saints and philosophers, it seems to me that they worried over the problem of evil unnecessarily, for no such problem exists. There is no absolute evil in the cosmic sense. The evil that we have experience of is relative to circumstances. For instance, without the Sun's heat life would be impossible, and yet too much of that heat causes wide-spread famines and great destruction of life. If I am attacked by typhoid fever the disease is a great evil to me, but not to the typhoid germs who are only too happy to feed and thrive on my body. I may add that an uncaused and capricious will would make any science of the mind impossible.

Responsibility

(8) If we have no free will, all our wishes arise as the result of, or under the influence or compulsion of causes, and if so, we cannot be held responsible and be blamed for our acts. We cannot help being what we are and doing what we may do.

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Punishment Of Wrong-doers

(9) It will naturally seem that such a view would be subversive of morality and lead to endless trouble in life. But the position would not be quite so bad. Whether any one can be blamed for his acts or not, the punishment of wrong-doers would be necessary and justifiable for our self-protection, which is the birth-right of all. But the motives for and question of suitability of punishment would be different. The motives would no longer be revenge and retribution, but to prevent, to deter and, where possible, to reform. This is being increasingly recognized in most civilised countries in the treatment of criminals, where the question of the reform of penal laws has been taken up, though the philosophical basis of the movement, which is determinism, is not adequately recognized yet by all its promoters.

Human Character And Culture Conflict

(10) Now we are in a position to draw an inference which vitally affects the question of culture conflict which we are discussing, and that inference is that human character and culture are the product of past causes, are fixed and cannot be changed easily. If you look round you will see that the character and mentality of everyone of your friends and acquaintances are different, and their fundamental traits remain the same all their lives. They have little control over them. Culture conflict is, therefore, natural and no question of blame can arise in respect of it.

III

The primitive instinct of Self-preservation is the deepest basis of conflict between man and man.

There is a fundamental basis of conflict between man and man. You must have noticed how two cats or two dogs behave when they first meet. Their first instinct is to snarl and growl at each other. Man's instinct is not very different, inspite of the schooling of thousands of years of social life and its necessities. The theory of evolution shows that however repugnant the idea may appear to be, it is a fact that the cat, the dog, the wolf, the tiger are our cousins, and however distant the relationship may be, the facts of life make it plain that we have not yet been able to get rid of our ancestral animal instincts. Man has made marvellous advances in his mental powers, and has in that respect left the animal far behind. But his instincts are still far behind his intellect and reason, even though he is the product of millions of years of evolution. In life, the instinct of self-preservation is the strongest and deepest. That has obviously a necessity in the creativity of Nature, for without it life could not endure. As each animal, however small, was evolved it lived by itself and for itself. At that stage fear, suspicion, hostility and aggressiveness were indispensable in the struggle for existence. Gradually was evolved the social instinct, as being more advantageous, first gregariousness and later social life proper, which in its highest form is to be found in the most civilized societies and nations of the present day. But the old wild instincts

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born of the great central instinct of self-preservation are still in us though modified and diluted by the experience of thousands of years of social life. Not so very much diluted either yet, except superficially, as you will realise if you think of the incredibly inhuman atrocities committed by man upon man during the last world-war that has only just ended. The other day I came across the following passage in a well known book :

“In mansion or in hovel the strain of life is perpetually felt. Man is not made for peaceful intercourse with his fellows ; he is by nature self-assertive, commonly aggressive, always critical in a more or less hostile spirit, of any characteristic which seems strange to him.”

Such still is human nature in the raw. Is it then surprising that differences in culture lead to conflict, and conflict often unto death ? But before I proceed further I would again stress a point to which I have referred above, that is that human character and culture are not acts of free will but products of causes that have been at work for thousands of years ; and so no one can be blamed for them.

IV

World-Stage And Life

We shall be liable to exaggerate the gravity of the conflict of culture that we see all over the world today unless we try to see in their true perspective the world-stage and the history of human life on it from the beginning. We shall attempt to do so as briefly as possible.

The late Sir James Jeans calls our sun “One inconspicuous grain of sand” and says that the

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sun can contain one million of our earth and that each Red Star is equal in size to a million million earths. I read in a well-known book on the science of life:

“Man is an inhabitant of a thin rind on a negligible detached blob of matter belonging to one among millions of island universes. Man is so far from being central or essential that the tale which the rest of the cosmos has to tell seems meaningless in the light of all his ideas and aspirations ... Human dignity rests upon nothing but itself.”

Such are we human beings. But I do not want to depress you too much. It matters not to us how inconceivably vast the universe is and how insignificant comparatively we are. We have to live our own lives and our aim should be to know how to make the best of them, how to get the most happiness out of them. The rest of the universe is nothing to us. Only we must not make an exaggerated estimate of our troubles.

We have just talked of space. Let us now come to time. Scientists have roughly calculated that the earth was detached from the sun two thousand million years ago. Life first appeared on our earth about one thousand million years ago, since when various forms of life have been evolved. Man is said to be “a mere upstart” and our own species of him is said to have existed for a million years. Fifteen thousand years ago man was still in the old stone age, and civilization, in the sense of a stable social life based upon agriculture and metal-working

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dates back to less than ten thousand years. Since then "evolution has presented itself as an accelerating process gathering momentum and hardly yet beyond the beginning of its revelations.

Civilization during the last ten thousand years.

Let us now briefly consider the history of human civilization and culture during the last ten thousand years. The 'oldest civilizations known to history are those of Sumeria, Crete, Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, China, India, Greece, Rome, Persia and Arabia. The oldest of them date back to about 5000 B. C. or about seven thousand years from now. What happened during the first three or four thousand years referred to above is unknown to history. But it can be safely assumed that evolution was progressing in its own way during that time, for the above civilizations could not have emerged all of a sudden.

General Character Of The Above Civilizations

All the above countries reached a high grade of culture and civilisation in almost every activity of life but with one grave defect. They had no consideration for the ordinary man or the masses. The mass of humanity did not come into the picture. Their stories are mainly stories of powerful chieftains, Kings and Emperors with large empires and gorgeous palaces, of splendour and luxury of all sorts for the upper few, of world conquerors invading and trying to subjugate the country and people of other chiefs for the mere joy of it, and in satisfaction of the primitive instincts of aggres-

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siveness and self-aggrandisement I have referred to above. But there was little regard for the well-being of the masses. There were slavery and forced labour in almost every country, and the poorer classes were treated like cattle by the powerful chiefs. Might was right in all its nakedness. The ordinary man accepted his fate with resignation, as inevitable.

Rise Of The Masses

The first great figure in history that preached the gospel of love for the poor was Buddha, born about 500 B. C. Next to him to preach that gospel was Jesus Christ, five hundred years later. Then came the Arab Prophet Mohammad born in 571 A. D. who taught that the creator rules the universe with love and mercy, and insisted on kindness and consideration in the daily life. After that the first great landmark of the progress and awakening of the masses was the French Revolution of 1789 A. D. Since then that progress has been more rapid, and the spirit of that revolution has gradually spread almost throughout the world.

The Last Two World-Wars

Let us now without tarrying longer on the way come to the last two world-wars, and see what further progress they have effected and registered, great evils though they were from the ordinary short term point of view. The Russian Revolution of 1917 carried the progress marked by the French Revolution a long step farther forward. Since then the great old autocratic empires of Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy, China (which had become a republic a

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a little earlier) and Japan have passed away. The fascistic dictatorships which succeeded some of these empires have also been destroyed. The down-trodden masses are now asserting themselves almost everywhere. Autocracy, as a political system, has been shaken to its foundations and the principle of Democracy as an ideal has firmly established itself. But other culture conflicts have arisen chiefly in the economic sphere, and socialism and communism are on their trial, as against capitalism. This conflict has plunged some countries, notably China, into civil war. But on the whole, far greater evils have been swept away by the two world-wars. Think of other achievements to the credit of these two wars in the cause of the masses. Trade Unionism has been strengthened to check capitalists. A world-wide labour movement has come into being for the uplift of the poor. There is just now another world-wide organisation in the making for the supply of food and other necessaries, to the poor and needy in distant parts of the world. Just think of India receiving supplies from Australia, Canada, the United States of America and even from distant Argentina, and Brazil, not to speak of different parts of Asia. This is a state of things that could not have been dreamt of before these World-Wars. In fact you can see that the whole world is tending to come together for mutual support and benefit. It is true new culture conflicts have arisen in some parts of the world, but they are unimportant and superficial in comparison with the basic evils concerning

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the bulk of the population of the world that have been swept away. These new conflicts will lead to good in the end, after the best ideologies have been selected after trial. Such temporary evils are necessary steps in the march of evolution towards progress. There is usually a struggle before evil is replaced by good, before existing circumstances improve. That is the essence of the process of evolution—whether evolution has a long term cosmic purpose to serve we know not. Biological evidence is against it. But there is evidence of its seeming to serve comparatively short term purposes. For instance while the terrible dramas of the two world-wars were being enacted, a change was coming over the scene as a deep under-current, silently and almost imperceptibly, and that under-current is heading towards the world unity of mankind, and their general welfare and happiness, specially of the masses. This apparent evolutionary urge may not be purposive and is probably due to the action of the ordinary forces and laws of nature. Some causes of this apparent urge will be obvious, e. g. the advance of education and knowledge, the demand of self-interest, experience, and appreciation of the advantages of united action.

VII

Nature's Ways Of Effecting Progress

The above progress towards the unity and general welfare of mankind has not been straight and steady, as past history shows. There have been ups and downs, advance and retrogression. Nature seems to advance by the trial-and-error method, forward and backward, by groping her

way about. She undoubtedly governs the world through fixed laws. But these laws often clash with one another, and then there is trouble. Other laws have to be brought into force to circumvent the difficulties created by these clashes, of which biology shows numerous instances. Biological laws are particularly complicated and are not fully understood yet. But this much is certain that evolutionary progress is usually not straight and continuous, but takes place through frequent conflicts and struggles between opposing forces. That applies to progress in culture just as well as to other kinds of progress. We need not, therefore, view the present culture conflicts with surprise or despondency. They are in fact, necessary steps on the path to further progress, inspite of temporary retrogression. A progress can only establish itself finally after it has been tested and found to be better after a struggle with the existing state of things. Again progress is itself a relative term depending on circumstances, on time and place. It may generally be said that in such conflict Nature is the final judge, and the fittest will win in the long run, though that run may be a very long one, and though in the meantime immense temporary harm may be done. Such are in any case the ways of Nature and they must be accepted.

VIII

Present Culture Conflict In India

Let us now come to a consideration of the subject with which we are more directly concerned, i. e. the present culture conflict between

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Hindus and Muslims in our own country. After about sixty years of agitation and striving for political advancement which began in a rudimentary form with the founding of the Indian National Congress in 1885, we have now reached a stage when a powerful foreign government is in the process of handing over, peacefully, complete independence to its people in a huge country of 400 millions. Such a contingency is unknown in the history of the world. It is due partly and directly to a phenomenal rise of the Labour Party in Great Britain, a progress which is an outcome, in a superficial view, of the great evil of World-War II, though the process must have been going on for many years past. With independence almost within our grasp, we are faced with this communal clash, that has led to the horrible tragedies of Calcutta, Eastern Bengal and Bihar and is tending to spread to other parts of India. The whole country is in a state of nervous fear and excitement in anticipation of further trouble. There is no knowing yet what course this conflict is going to take. It threatens to plunge the country into civil war and block further progress. From one point of view, it may be said that the way in which we are about to obtain independence is not quite natural and has its dangers. From a wider point of view, however, nothing that actually happens can be unnatural, being the result of a chain of causes. If through the natural sequence of causes we are fated to go through a Civil War it cannot be helped. But the situation does

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not seem to be quite so desperate yet.

Culture Determined By The Entire Past

I shall not spend much time over trying to trace the causes of the difference in the culture of Hindus and Muslims. They are many and extend far into past history. As I have said above the culture of a race or nation is determined by its entire past and cannot be changed except very slowly and except through the action of counter-influences.

No question of praise or blame arises concerning the present Culture Conflict

Here we must be clear about one most important fact, i. e. that there can be no question of blame or praise in connection with differences in culture between communities or nations, as I have referred to above and which will be obvious if the principle of determinism is understood and accepted. It would ease the situation greatly if we could realise this truth, if we could be convinced that both Muslims and Hindus have been helplessly and relentlessly swept on to the present conflict by force of circumstances beyond their control. Here I am reminded of a passage I read the other day in the Autobiography of Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru. He writes :

“The Lahore Congress drew near. Meanwhile events were marching step by step, inevitably pushed forward, so it seemed, by some motive force of their own. Individuals, for all the brave show they put up, played a very minor role. One had the feeling of being a cog in a great machine which swept on relentlessly”.

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This is exactly how events occur, and this is how the present clash has come about. Hindus and Muslims, the British Cabinet Mission, the Viceroy have all been cogs in this great and mysterious deterministic machine of the universe, though they may feel that it is they who have done this or that. As an eminent philosopher has said "when we look forward we see free will but when we look back we see determinism." I must however say here that I do not take a mechanistic view of the universe.. No machine can run unless driven by some force behind it.

Present Conflict Essentially Political

The basic nature of the differences in culture between Muslims and Hindus must be well-known to all Indians. They are racial, religious, traditional and relating to customs, habits and manners. These differences had lost much of their acerbity and irritative effect on one another through the communities living together side by side in one country for over a thousand years. Now they have flared up owing to the new political situation, when an independent National Government is about to be established on a Democratic basis. In all fairness it should be realised that Muslims being in a decided minority in India as a whole, the fear of their being outvoted in controversial political problems, affecting their special culture and legitimate rights, is perfectly natural. It must be obvious that the fear must be allayed and removed if possible before friendly relations can be restored between the two communities. How to do it is the great

problem and a most difficult one in a complicated situation like this. It is a problem that must be solved mainly by politicians and the best brains among them are trying their best to do so. In that connection I can only make a few general observations for what they may be worth.

IX The Remedy

Some time ago in another connection I wrote as follows:

"Instincts and emotions can not be changed by only instruction and advice. It is the force of circumstances, great evils like wars, the relentless school of experience that can change human nature, and that slowly. A quarter of a century ago, the last great War produced the League of Nations, but the lessons of that war did not sink deep enough into men's hearts, and the League failed. The present war, it may be hoped, will make some further progress along the same path. But the impatient educationist must realize that change of heart is a slow business and if he expects a large and quick return for all his schemes he will be disappointed".

Advice And Exhortation Of Little Use

In my opinion, as remedies for this culture conflict advice, exhortation, appeals for peace and amity, the preaching of humanitarian principles and high morality will not produce much effect. It is, I am afraid, force of circumstances, shocks, and practical experience of evil from such conflicts, that can have real and lasting effect. It may sound cruelly pessimistic to say so but the recent terrible tragedies have already had a sober-

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ring effect on both communities and has probably advanced the cause of unity more than we think. How deep the effect has been and how long it will last the future only can show.

Two Hopeful Signs

Events during and subsequent to the Calcutta tragedy disclose two hopeful signs. The first is the help that men of the two communities gave each other, even at the risk of their own lives, in a very large number of cases. The men who took part in the carnage and destruction of property were mostly ignorant low class ruffians, though no doubt there were better class men behind them to incite and organise. The second indication of hope is in the numerous letters that have been written to the Press by men of both communities appealing for peace and amity and pointing out the disadvantages of such a conflict. I attach much more importance to such letters from Muslims as, rightly or wrongly, they consider themselves the aggrieved party, and because politically they are the weaker,

The above two circumstances indicate that Muslims and Hindus are now not so antagonistic in their feelings towards each other as they used to be and that the effect of having lived together in the same country for so long has softened down the irritating character towards one another of the differences in their culture, religious and secular, and made them more tolerant. There may still be a riot or two over cow killing or music before mosques, but they are no longer so frequent or so vicious in character.

as they used to be. It is common experience that even 20 or 25 years ago, both communities usually lived side by side in concord and friendly intercourse, and even used to take part in some of each other's religious ceremonies. It was politics that created a fresh breach between them a few years ago, and that breach has been widening until it has reached the present grave state of affairs. It is of course fostered and supported by the old culture conflict, to which it has given a fillip.

Self Interest The Bed-rock Of Life

This conflict is perfectly natural, for self-interest is the bed-rock of life in the struggle for existence. The primitive animal instincts of hostility, aggressiveness and acquisitiveness against one another still survive in man almost in full force. Higher feelings of sympathy and kindness have no doubt been evolved later but they can only flow from the stronger to the weaker. There can be no point in their flowing from the weaker to the stronger. Besides, these feelings, being of much later evolution, are comparatively superficial and are easily overpowered by the basic instincts of self-preservation and self-interest. The reader must not, however, think that these latter instincts are in any sense blameworthy or immoral. They are essentially necessary and fully justifiable or else life would be impossible. They should not be confused with what is commonly understood by the word 'selfishness', which in social life means the pursuit of self-interest at the expense of the interests of others; and which, no doubt, is blameable.

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This conflict can be alleviated only so far as the requirements of self-interest of both communities can be mutually adjusted and satisfied and in this adjustment, the stronger party can, I think, afford to meet the weaker more than half way, which alone can create trust and confidence that are essential for the restoration of real good feelings. This difficult problem will have to be solved by a proper estimation of human nature as it is, and not as it should be, not by idealism but by a proper estimation of human nature as it is, and not as it should be, not by idealism but by realism with a little leaven of idealism which I would call far-sighted realism. I am aware that it is easy enough to evolve principles, the difficulty lies in giving practical effect to them. Giving practical effect to any principles decided upon must be left to politicians, who are practised in the art, and have the opportunity of discussing questions with one another face to face. This is being tried just now by some of the best brains belonging to both parties. If one party makes demands which the other considers unreasonable and cannot possibly meet, the conflict must remain, and will only disappear, when both parties have had practical experience of sufficient evil from it to think it wiser to come to terms. There is, it seems to me, no other way. That is how evolution towards progress takes place in Nature. That is Nature's trial-and-error method to which we must bow, cruel though that method often is.

Finally, I am constrained to say that consi-

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dering the general character and the very slow speed of the evolution of world affairs in the past to which I have referred above, I am not sanguine of any quick alleviation of the present culture conflict in our country. It will take its time and we have got to be patient. Mankind is certainly moving towards world-unity, however slowly. Let that give us heart and hope. Hope based on mere idealism is illusory, and can only lead to disappointment. If I have held up a picture of the future that appears pessimistic and depressing, I am sorry. I am, however, not without hope that I may be mistaken in my views.

CHAPTER VII

DETERMINISM AND FREE-WILL

(A reply to a Critic)

(1947)

I welcome the article ‘Determinism and Free-Will’ published in the Behar Herald of 19th April 1947, commenting on my article ‘Culture Conflict’ published on March 22nd. It is a pleasure to meet a reader who is interested in the subject which is usually considered to be merely of academic value, but which in my opinion has an important bearing on our outlook on life and its happiness. In this connection, I would first refer to two of my previous articles on the same subject published in the Behar Herald, which deal with it more fully. They are (1) ‘Reorientation of Life’ published in the Annual Number of 1945 (2) ‘Our Anti-Social Instincts’ published in the Annual Number of 1946.

I shall now reply to the points raised by my critic as briefly as possible.

(1) There is a basic difference between Determinism and Fatalism. Fatalism assumes pre-destination by Providence. Determinism means also a kind of preordination, but by the law of cause and effect. Fatalism would tend to paralyse all effort, as under that doctrine one could not alter what was pre-destined whatever one might do. Determinism should not have that effect, for one of its basic principles is that every cause will produce its effect uniformly. If, therefore, one

feels a wish to do anything there can be no reason for not giving effect to that wish, for it has been determined by causes, and one's action according to that wish will produce its effect. My critic has asked "why suggest a remedy for the present culture conflict?". The answer will be found in what I have said above. Of course the ultimate effect will be produced as the resultant of all the causes at work, including the remedy suggested. I should here make it clear that what remedy a person may feel inclined to suggest will also be determined by hundreds of causes, e.g. his heredity, mental constitution, education, environment, political faith, emotions, power of reasoning &c.

(2) The words 'mechanical' and 'mechanistic' mean nothing to me. They may mean anything or nothing according to how one may define them. We should look at facts.

(3) My critic has said: "because such a creed (determinism) left no room for the operation of choice and freewill, it removed all basis for morality." In my view morality is morality, whether one believes in determinism or free-will. One's belief in one or other of these two doctrines can only affect the question of punishment or blame. One can say that if a person does an immoral act out of free-will he is blameable or punishable, but if he does it under the influence or compulsion of causes, he should not be blamed or punished. In my opinion even in the latter case he can be justifiably blamed or punished for the protection of

other individuals or society, but the motives for blame or punishment should not in that case be revenge or retribution, but to prevent, to deter, and if possible to reform. That idea if accepted will greatly add to our peace and happiness in life as I have discussed more fully in my article 'Re-orientation of Life.'

(4) My critic says: "in 1917 Einstein showed that Max Planck's non-mechanical theory (Quantum theory) of light *appeared* to dethrone the law of causation from the high pedestal from which it was held to rule the course of the natural world." In his comment the word *appeared* makes all the difference. So far as I know both Einstein and Max Planck are firm determinists. Einstein has said that the failure of the law of causation in the above case is only *apparent*; and that the appearance of failure is due to the inability of Science, up to now, to observe the behaviour of particles in the sub-atomic world.

This brings me to a discussion of the "Principle of Indeterminacy" of Heisenberg referred to by my critic. In the above expression indeterminacy has nothing to do with "indeterminism" as Bertrand Russell has very clearly shown. It merely means "inability to determine." The whole position has been summed up as follows in a well-known book:

"Heisenberg's Principle of Indeterminacy states that an electron may have position or it may have velocity but it cannot in any exact sense have both. The more exact the determi-

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nation of the position of an electron, the vaguer becomes its velocity, and the more exact the velocity, the vaguer the position. How are we to interpret this principle? Are we to say that it is merely an expression of the fact that our methods of measurement are defective—perhaps inherently defective—but that nevertheless an electron's behaviour is strictly determined? Or are we to interpret the principle as an indication that the law of strict Causality does not apply to the fundamental operations of nature? At the present time scientific men are of two minds about this matter."

For my part I prefer to follow Einstein and Max Planck rather than Sir James Jeans and Arthur Eddington and their school specially for the following reasons:

(a) When the law of causality and order appears to prevail in most observable phenomena, it is not likely that it fails in the fundamental operations of nature. In any case it should be presumed to be correct until it is disproved.

(b) Determinism is consistent with order and regularity in life, while free-will would make life a chaos and impossible. A belief in determinism would also make life much happier and more peaceful as I have tried to show in my article "Re-orientation of Life".

I fail to understand why some eminent philosophers and scientists are so anxious to believe in a theory that is against our practical experience in life, and would make life full of

One Hundred and one

uncertainties, and why they are always trying to get hold of any possible excuse for doing so. It seems to me that it is probably due to an irrational religious prejudice from the time of Plato, as I have referred to in my article under discussion, a prejudice due to irrational conceptions regarding God and the problem of Evil. Hindu religion, at any rate in its higher aspects, is based on philosophy and no idea of free-will occurs either in Hindu philosophy or religion.

(5) My critic has laid stress on "our innate conviction of free-will". It seems to me that that conviction is based on a misunderstanding. I admit we have an innate conviction that we can do what we wish, unless prevented by extraneous circumstances. But I do not think we have an innate conviction that any wish arises in our mind without any cause. In most cases I am able to trace the causes of my wishes. We should also remember that we have a subconscious mind, the working of which may not in some cases come to the surface of our conscious mind. But generally speaking my introspection shows that "We can do what we will but we cannot will what we will" as Schopenhauer put it long ago. The innate conviction of freedom mentioned by my critic refers to our action and not to our mind. That makes all the difference. This confusion of thought has been most unfortunate.

CHAPTER VIII
SOME BASIC ASPECTS
of
MATTER, LIFE AND MIND
(1948)

(Note :—Where no other name is mentioned the observations are by the author.)

i

Ultimate Truth

To know Ultimate Truth is not given to man. Logically the universe must be accepted as self-existent and eternal. We can seek knowledge by two methods, induction and scientific verification. Induction gives us knowledge that may be highly probable, but is not certain. Scientific verification has come to its limitation in the Principle of Indeterminacy. Science can probe no further in that direction in the microscopic world, and has been driven to purely mathematical conceptions of reality, which the great genius of Einstein has developed.

ii

Relativity and Quantum

The theories of Relativity and Quantum have revolutionized ideas as to fundamental realities. The former, which is purely mathematical, is based on conceptions which to the ordinary man appear bizarre and fantastic. But some of them have found support from the results of experiments. Some are still purely speculative, such as a finite universe, cylindrical (Einstein) or spherical

One Hundred and three

(De Sitter). But after all mathematical formulae cannot penetrate Nature. Bertrand Russell says : "In the theory of relativity we are concerned with the structure, not with the material, of which the structure is composed". Eddington says : "In regard to the nature of things this knowledge is only an empty shell—a form of symbols. It is knowledge of structural form and not knowledge of content." Further, Science has not yet been able to reconcile the theories of relativity and quantum.

iii

Nature of Space

Is the whole of space pervaded by a fundamental entity or 'a universal sub-stratum of things', as Eddington puts it, or is it partly empty ? The replies of Science to this question appear inconsistent. Bertrand Russell says : "We might try to say there are electrons and protons, and the rest is empty. But in the empty regions there are light-waves, so we cannot say that nothing happens in them. We may say, therefore, that there are events everywhere in space-time.As to the intrinsic nature of these events we know nothing."

It seems more satisfying to conceive that the entire universe is pervaded by a fundamental entity, and that electrons and protons and other physical objects represent its various states of concentration and configuration. At its heart is its potentiality for change and evolution according

One Hundred and four

to uniform laws. There is no such thing as empty space. Space without content is meaningless.

iv

Evolution

Empirically, we see inorganic objects, plants and animals all round us. The researches of science have disclosed life in most rudimentary forms, such as protoplasm, protista, amoeba etc. In fact evolution from matter to life can be traced almost step by step, through the artificial preparation of organic substances, colloid compounds, enzyme action, bacteriophage, virus, protoplasm, protista, amoeba etc. It is said that bacteriology has practically obliterated the border line between non-life and life. Nay the gradual evolution of mind can also be traced alongside that of life, from sense perception to conception, thought, reason, imagination, poetry, art etc. So-called dead matter is not inert, for it has motion sometimes with speed not far short of that of light, and its various compounds have physical and chemical properties. So what we consider dead matter is also in a sense alive. The only thing that it cannot be credited with is mind, which is a later product of evolution.

v

Viscount Samuel has said :

“Sports appear suddenly and unexpectedly amongst plants or animals, or genius among men. It does not follow that they are uncaused. What seems sudden and spontaneous, according to our standards and viewed from the result, might seem to be gradual, and the outcome of elaborate

One Hundred and five

processes, if judged by nature's own standard, and viewed from the standpoint of prior events. The same mechanism that continuously moves the hands of a clock suddenly strikes the hour."

From a union of two gases, hydrogen and oxygen, there emerges liquid water, an unpredictable novelty with wonderful properties.

vi

No one who has the scientific temper asserts that what is now believed in Science is exactly right; he asserts that it is a stage on the road towards the exact.

(Bertrand Russell)

vii

The work of Einstein has emphasized the difficulty of permanent achievement in Science. Newton's law of gravitation had reigned so long and explained so much that it seemed scarcely credible that it should stand in need of correction. Nevertheless such correction has at last proved necessary and no one doubts that the correction will in its turn have to be corrected.

(Bertrand Russell)

viii

Mathematical technique is now so powerful that it can find a formula for even the most erratic world.

..

(Bertrand Russell)

One Hundred and six

ix

Entropy

To infer from the Second Law of Thermodynamics that the world must have been created at a definite time in the past and is bound to meet its "heat death" within a finite time in the future is the height of folly and vanity on the part of Scientists. There are yet many more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of even in science.

x

Evil

I cannot account for the existence of evil by any rational method. To want to do so is to be co-equal with God. I am, therefore, humble enough to recognize evil as such and I call God long-suffering and patient precisely because He permits evil in the world. I know that He has no evil in Himself and yet there is evil. He is the author of it and yet untouched by it.

(Gandhi)

xi

Misuse Of Words

In his book "The Intellectual Ideal" Benoyendra Nath Sen, in explaining the Vedanic doctrine of Maya of Shankar, and the latter's solution of the problem of evil, says: "If sorrow had been only the soul of bitterness, and joy only the over-flowing of bliss, you might have charged God with partiality or distributing joy and sorrow unequally. But if sorrow

One Hundred and seven

has in its depths a hidden fountain of joy, and joy rests on a basis of deepest pain, nay even if within the darkness of Sin there is a hidden power that maketh for righteousness—there is no inequality to complain of, but every object, high or low, great or small, is equally a reflection of the Infinite in the Finite." A man sees his son slaughtered in his presence, and his wife and daughter carried off and raped, as happened in thousands of cases in the Punjab only the other day; what hidden fountain of joy can he see in his sorrow? —I wonder. What a desperate attempt to solve the problem consistently with the suppositions of religion!

xii

Here you may contemplate with admiration philosophers addressing themselves to the solution, dissolution and resolution of the Absolute, to the determination of the indeterminate and to the definition of the infinite.

(Anatole France— in a humorous mood)

xiii

When we know intellectually that loss is freedom, then we are philosophers, when loss has become freedom then we are baptized in wonder, and are fit to die.

("Fountain"— of words)

xiv

Words ! words ! words ! What would we have done without their willing service ? What won-

One Hundred and eight

der and admiration have been evoked by their loftiness ? But into what confusion of thought have they also led great thinkers, and what imposing structures have been raised by scholars with their empty shells after killing their soul !

xv

The problem of evil has been the despair of saints and philosophers. But to the scientist the solution is rationally simple. The universe is governed by fixed laws, Good and Evil are both the products of those laws. relative to persons and circumstances. There is no good or evil in the absolute or cosmic sense. What is good to A may be evil to B. B, an officer, is obliged to retire before his time due to ill-health. In consequence A, next to him in grade, gets a lift unexpectedly. The ill-health of B is an evil to him, but a good to A. The Allies and Axis Powers went to war. The Allies won, though both the powers prayed to God for victory. The victory was a good to the Allies but an evil to the Axis Powers. God is indifferent to good or evil in the cosmic sense. He is a constitutional monarch who has solemnly pledged Himself to accept the advice of His laws. Pre-scientific religious and philosophical speculations failed to realize this simple truth, and floundered hopelessly to solve the problem.

xvi

The difficulties of the problem of evil have led saints and philosophers to invent the myth

One Hundred and nine

of Free Will, so that man and not God might be held responsible for the existence of evil. Indian philosophy is free from this myth. It has preferred to circumvent the difficulty by inventing another myth, i.e., the myth of Maya or illusion.

xvii

Dignity Of Man

The doctrine of Free Will is still stoutly defended not only by some European philosophers but also by some scientists. Plato first propounded it for the defence of God and protection of morality. It can do neither, and is mere wishful thinking. So far as these scientists are concerned, their belief is based, not on science, but on two irrelevant considerations i.e., (1) religious bias as Christians, (2) regard for the dignity of man, to deprive whom of free will would, they think, be to lower him to the level of animals and make him an automaton.

xviii

It must still be admitted that living matter makes rather a poor show if considered as the purpose of the whole creation. But it is not to these that the evolutionary theologian points with pride, it is to the soul of man. Unfortunately there is no impartial arbiter to decide on the merits of the human race, but for my part when I consider the poison gases, the researches into bacteriological warfare, their meanness, cruelties

One Hundred and ten

and oppressions, I find them considered as the crowning gem of the creation! somewhat lacking in lustre.

(Bertrand Russell)

xix

I can only repeat that if this is the divine sense of justice, it differs from mine, and that I think mine superior. If indeed the world in which we live has been produced in accordance with a plan, we shall have to reckon Nero as a saint in comparison with the author of that plan. Fortunately, however, the evidence of Divine purpose is non-existent.

(Bertrand Russel)

xx

It is said that man is an animal of high dignity, in fact not an animal at all but made in the image of God, and that the universe has been made for him. I wonder if believers in Free Will also believe that man has created himself and invested himself with Free Will. If not, if God has created him and given him Free Will in order to saddle him with the responsibility for the existence of evil which legitimately should rest on Himself, He has been guilty of unspeakable meanness. But God is above good and evil and too great for such meanness. The choice lies between the dignity of God and the dignity of man with his foolish belief in Free Will. You can choose which you like.

One Hundred and eleven

xxi

Man is an infinitesimal speck in the Universe and a poor creature, a moral leper as past history shows down to the last two world-wars, and his very recent performances in the Punjab. But one must not be too severe. After all he is what he has been made by nature with his arrogant but foolish belief in the freedom of his will—no more, no less. He is the highest of living creatures, not fit to commune with God, but fit to speculate about Him, since Nature has given him mind and reason, though his reason is, more often than not, overpowered by instinct.

xxii

Human Mind

The most fundamental activities of the human mind are non-rational, and largely unconscious activities. The power of conscious reasoning is a later development, playing but a minor part even in the most highly developed human being, on the surface so to speak of the finely built edifice of instincts, emotions and desires which form the main structure of the mental organism. In many cases the apparent importance of rational activity is seen to be illusory, forming as it were a cloak for the action of deep-seated instincts, emotions and desires.

(Tansley)

xxiii

In human freedom in the philosophical sense I am definitely a disbeliever. Everybody acts not only under external compulsion, but also in

One Hundred and twelve

accordance with inner necessity. Schopenhauer's saying that a man can do as he will, but not will as he will, has been an inspiration to me since my youth up, and a continual consolation and unfailing well-spring of patience in the face of the hardships of life, my own and others'.

(Einstein)

xxiv

Do not think that the so called free choice means free will, as has been asserted by many philosophers. If two alternatives of action exist there is necessarily a choice. But which of the alternatives you will choose will depend upon and will be determined by many circumstances such as the constitution of your mind, your upbringing, environment, circumstances surrounding you at the time and so on. You may choose one alternative, and a friend of yours another. In such a case the expression freedom of choice is meaningless, and the act of choosing is not free, though in your ignorance or pride you may think so.

xxv

Free Will must be causeless will, i. e., a will or wish not determined by any cause. To call free a wish determined by reason i. e. all the facts taken into consideration in reasoning, as some philosophers have done, is an abuse of the word free. It is a confusion of thought or wishful thinking in order to support the doctrine of free will at any cost.

One Hundred and thirteen

xxvi

Believers in free will do not realize what a dreadful calamity it would be if we had free or causeless will, for then our will would be capricious and uncertain, and life would be a chaos. Realize thankfully that free will is a mere myth born of our ignorance and pride or religious prejudice.

xxvii

Looking forward we see free will, but looking back we see determinism.

(Viscount Samuel)

xxviii

Some effort must, therefore, be made to show that the effort of volition is not the mysterious and utterly incomprehensible process that the extreme libertarians would have it to be, but that it is to be accounted for by the same principles as other modes of human activity, that it involves no new principles of activity and energy, but only a more subtle and complex interplay of those impulses which actuate all animal behaviour, and in which the ultimate mystery of mind and life

—

(McDougall)

xxix

Murphy—But it is now the fashion in physical science to attribute something like free will even to the routine processes of organic nature.

Einstein—That nonsense is not merely nonsense. It is objectionable nonsense.

One Hundred and fourteen

Bertrand Russell says that there is nothing whatever in Heisenberg's Principle of Indeterminacy to show that any physical event is uncaused. Indeterminacy simply indicates inability on the part of science to determine.

xxx

One hears a good deal of statistical laws as an indication of the failure of the law of causality to apply to physical phenomena. Max Planck says: "Statistical laws are dependent on the assumption of the strict law of causality functioning in each case." This is also common sense, for why should the average behaviour of a large number of particles be always more or less uniform unless their individual behaviour is also uniform? Capricious behaviour on their part must at times lead to violent fluctuation in statistical results.

xxxi

Good and Evil are of two kinds, long-term and short-term. You undergo a painful operation and get cured of a disease; the pain of the operation is a short-term evil, and the cure a long-term good. You indulge in drinking bouts and in course of time injure your health. The pleasure from the drinking bouts is a short-term good, and the damage to your health a long-term evil. The terrible slaughter and atrocities of the last two world-wars, and more recently in the Punjab were, if I may say so, a comparatively short-term evil. The consequent destruction of the autocratic and oppressive Empires of Germany, Russia, Austria, Italy, Japan, and of their fascistic

One Hundred and fifteen

successors has been a long-term good, and given the down-trodden masses an opportunity to rise. It is yet to be seen whether the evil in the Punjab will lead to any long-term good.

xxxii

Saints pursue very long term good or ideals such as universal love and brotherhood, non-violence and such like, and exercise tremendous influence over the ignorant and semi-educated masses, who are emotionally swayed for the time being by those ideals. But human nature changes so slowly that two thousand years after Jesus Christ, the last two world-wars, and two thousand and five hundred years after Buddha, the terrible happenings in the Punjab have been possible. The march of evolution is very slow indeed.

xxxiii

Saints cannot be expected to be philosophers and politicians, much less scientists. The latter have to deal with short-term evil, and their action must often infringe the long-term ideals of saints. Such infringement is justified and necessary for meeting short-term evil so as to lead to long-term good.

xxxiv

Evolution progresses by the trial-and-error method, in a zig-zag course, forward and backward and forward again. Its course is illustrative of long-term and short-term good and evil. Nature seems unintelligently intelligent. If any thing goes wrong in her course of evolution she

One Hundred and sixteen

puts it right eventually, but cannot do so by a direct and expeditious method. It seems to be due to the fact that the fixed laws of nature often clash with one another and any undesirable result produced has to be put right in a circuitous way through the agency of some of those very laws. Ultimately and in the long run the fittest will survive. The Hegelian dialectic is based on this process of evolution in nature which goes on in cycles or in a zig-zag course, ceaselessly and endlessly. There is nothing static in Nature; there are only "events," moving towards—what? We know not and shall probably never know.

xxxv

By ingenious experiments upon suitable creatures, biologists can remove small parts of the developing embryo and graft them on to others. Such a piece taken from an embryo newt just before the first rudiments of the nervous system appear, and grafted on to another newt of the same age, will go on developing, and will produce what it would have produced if left in the original position quite irrespective of its new surroundings. The piece that ought to have formed an eye will still do so, even if it finds itself in the flank or even the interior regions of another embryo.

(Julian Huxley)

xxxvi

One aspect of determinism which conduces materially to the welfare and happiness of mankind has, strange to say, been

unnoticed or neglected even by philosophers. This aspect is the fact that determinism is the real and rational basis for love and brotherhood. Our fellow creatures, however bad and obnoxious, are what they have been made by nature and are not responsible for any harm they may do. They just cannot help themselves, and so deserve toleration; and toleration is one of the greatest sources of peace and happiness in life. Toleration is not easy to practise, but the realisation of its rational basis and benefit would greatly help. The preaching of universal love and brotherhood by Saints has this basis, though they are not conscious of the fact and feel its value instinctively so to speak. Determinism is a necessity not only for the orderly conduct of life, but a belief in it is essential for a peaceful life. Free will would not only make life a chaos, but its conception affords justification for the ugly emotions of anger, hatred, revenge and retribution and obstructs the evolution of social good feeling.

xxxvii

One need only grow old to become gentler in one's judgments. I see no fault committed which I could not have committed myself.

• (Goethe)

xxxviii

Never let it be forgotten that there is scarcely a single moral action of a single man of which other men can have such a knowledge, in its ultimate grounds, its surrounding incidents and

One Hundred and eighteen

the real determining causes of its merits, as to warrant their pronouncing a conclusive judgment upon it. What is not needful, and is commonly wrong, is to pass a judgment on our fellow-creatures.

(Gladstone)

xxxix

Praise and blame are empty words which have no application in life. We are good or bad, great or small, because nature has made us so. We cannot help ourselves.

xl

Happiness is the only sanction of life. Where happiness fails, existence remains a mad and lamentable experiment.

(Santayana)

xli

Happiness is everything and the rest is nothing. Of what use is this wondrous universe if it does not bring us happiness? The quest of happiness is the basis of all religion. Happiness is the truest measure of value to living beings, though not in an absolute or cosmic sense.

xlii

The doctrine of values is the mythology of philosophers. And if Goodness, Beauty and Truth were accepted as realities, absolute and eternal, what are we to say of Evil, Ugliness and Falsehood? Are they to be accepted also,

One Hundred and nineteen

to be dignified by capital letters and surrounded by a glow of rhetoric ?

(Viscount Samuel)

xliii

Friends and relations often fail but Nature never. Love of Nature is a most lasting source of happiness. Those who possess it are indeed fortunate.

xliv

Literary activity is by no means an inviolable proof of that mental attitude that makes the truly civilized man. Experience offers proof on every hand that vigorous mental life may be but one side of a personality of which the other side is moral barbarism.

(Gissing)

xlv

The opinions that are held with passion are always those for which no good ground exists; indeed the passion is the measure of the holder's lack of rational conviction. Opinion in politics and religion are almost always held passionately,

(Bertrand Russell)

xlvi

People enter into a discussion ostensibly in order to ascertain the truth. In reality they only try to vindicate their own ideas, right or wrong. Argumentativeness is an unpleasant and unprofitable quality, for it entails loss of good time

One Hundred and twenty

and good temper. At its bottom are vanity and self-sufficiency.

xlvii

You cannot argue with a prophet. You can only disbelieve him.

(Bonar Law)

xlviii

An important scientific innovation rarely makes its way by gradually winning over and converting its opponents : It rarely happens that Paul becomes Saul. What does happen is that its opponents die out, and that the growing generation is familiarized with the idea from the beginning: another instance of the fact that the future lies with youth.

(Max Planck)

xlix

Chance or accident is the result of unknown or unforeseen causes at work.

L

The things necessary for happiness are not wealth and position, but health, moderate comfort in food and shelter, congenial occupation, peaceful family relations, a few good friends. It is never given to man to possess all these. So life must always be a mixture of happiness and unhappiness, and one should not expect from life what life is not capable of giving. Toleration of the foibles of others, and ability to accept the inevitable with resignation are most important

One Hundred and twenty one

sources of peace of mind. Above all it is necessary to develop a sense of proportion and a certain amount of detachment, which are born of the realization that life and all concerned with it are fleeting. Be not unduly elated in prosperity, or unduly depressed in adversity, but think of the famous saying : "And this shall also pass away." If you want to get the most happiness out of life and avoid its evils, so far as may be possible, try to know the Laws of Nature and cultivate their good will. God is too great to be charged with not having created a perfect world. He is a constitutional monarch and above good and evil. Indian philosophy has rightly called Him Nirguna-Brahma (God without any attributes.).

li

All popular religions preach that God only helps those who worship Him and pray to Him. Can it be that Great God is as fond of flattery as the meanest of human beings ?

lii

The Truth about the Ultimate Cause or God will ever remain beyond human knowledge. But for most, some sort of religion is a necessity. Referring to those who feel helpless amid the sorrows and tribulations of life without firm faith in some kind of religion, Herbert Spencer, the head of the modern agnostic school says :

"Nothing but evil can follow a change in the creed of such ; and unless cruelly thoughtless the

One Hundred and twenty two

Agnostic will carefully shun discussion of religious subjects with them."

lili

Phases of Religion

An Atheist does not know, but thinks he knows. An Agnostic knows that he does not know, and wishes to know. Vedantism in attempting to know lost itself in perplexity of thought and ended in conceiving a Supreme Spirit devoid of all attributes. Popular religions have doctrines numberless in variety. There were Agnostics long before Thomas Huxley coined the word (in 1869). Among world figures, Buddha (born 560 B. C.) was an Agnostic though few realize the fact. The famous Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius (121—180 A. D.) has been called the Saint of Agnosticism. Herbert Spencer was the head of the modern Agnostic school. Hinduism is the most catholic of all religions. It is in fact not a religion, but a social bond that leaves all Hindus free to choose their own religious faith.

liv

Truth in Religion

Archbishop Whately has said: "It makes all the difference in the world whether we put truth in the first place or in the second place." What is truth, specially in religion? It was rash on the part of an Archbishop to have made such a statement. I should be very much surprised

One Hundred and twenty-three

if the Archbishop has any doubt as to the truth of the doctrines he preaches or as to the falsity of doctrines opposed to his.

lv

Purpose in Nature

Some eminent philosophers and scientists believe in purpose in Nature. Others like Bertrand Russell, J. B. S. Haldane, Sir Charles Sherrington are opposed to that view. This is one of those ultimate problems that will probably ever remain beyond human solution. All one can say is that if there is purpose in Nature, it is constantly thwarted and put back.

lvi

Status of Man

Our galaxy, including the milky way, turns out to be merely one of many galaxies in space. It is approximately 100,000 light-years in diameter. Yet this galaxy of ours, with its nearly a billion counted stars, and undoubtedly additional billions still to be detected, is merely one of hundreds of similar galaxies. The great nebula Andromeda is itself a great spiral galaxy of stars, a galaxy so large, that a ray of light would require 40,000 to 80,000 years to cross it, and so far from us (900,000 light years) that viewed from anywhere within it, the milky way would be merely a faint spot in the universe.

(Harold Richards)

One Hundred and twenty four

The presumptuous arrogance of man, an infinitesimal speck, is indeed staggering.

lvii

The Law of Causality

Determinism is looked upon by believers in Free Will as a kind of rigid mechanical necessity, which is degrading to man as reducing him to the status of an automaton. A Government, in order to encourage education, offers a scholarship for special study to be awarded to the student who may stand first at a competitive examination. Candidates are invited and an examination, is held. Competitor A obtains the highest number of marks and is awarded the scholarship. He then goes to a foreign country and completes a course of special study, during which the amount of the scholarship is sent to him at regular intervals. This sequence of events has obviously been determined by a chain of causes which may be called both physical and mental. But where is the rigid mechanical necessity about it which is degrading to any of the parties concerned ? Causality and Law are merely convenient names for a sequence of events. We can trace the sequence, but we cannot tell why and how they follow each other. The uniformity of the sequence is the essence and we call it law. Has man the power to stem the cosmic flow of events including the flow of his own will ? Some think so in their ignorant arrogance.

One Hundred and twenty five

lviii

Ideal in Life

All saints and sages have preached love and brotherhood. The pursuit of the general welfare and happiness of all is the highest ideal in life. Individual and social happiness are inseparably bound up like space-time and act and re-act on each other. Let those who can, pursue in their own interest this ideal in the present life before meddling with the next. There is more than enough to do here.

lvix

Dogmatism

Give me, above all other liberties, the liberty to know, to utter and to argue freely according to my conscience.

(Milton)

Free, but not dogmatic, expression of opinion by all ensures the quickest progress in knowledge. Dogmatism clogs it.

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